

“Exposing
the True Costs
of War”

The War Crimes Times

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U.S. FOREIGN POLICY BOMBS

Diverse disapproval of military intervention

President Barack Obama's decision to intervene in the Libyan civil war received the lowest approval rating from Americans of any U.S. military operation in the last forty years. Internationally, China and Russia, both of which expressed disapproval from the outset, are being joined in opposition by India, South Africa, and Brazil. What's more, the U.S. is viewed unfavorably by most Arab and Muslim nations.

The UK's *Guardian* reported that a poll has shown that “many, if not most, countries around the world also view the [Libyan] action as risky, self-interested, and duplicitous.” A March Gallup poll showed only 47% of Americans approved of the recent military action in Libya. (The highest approval rate in four decades—90%—was for the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan which followed the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.) In June, a Rasmussen Reports poll showed only 26% of Americans favored continued military action in Libya.

According to a Pew report in May, “[I]n key Arab nations and in other predominantly Muslim countries, views of the U.S. remain negative, as they have been for nearly a decade. Indeed, in

Jordan [13% U.S. approval rating], Turkey [10%], and Pakistan [11%], views are even more negative than they were one year ago.”

U.S. approval in the most favorable Muslim countries, Indonesia and Pakistan, has declined in the last year as well. The report states “Obama remains unpopular in the Muslim nations polled, and most disapprove of the way he has handled calls for political change roiling the Middle East. Moreover, many of the concerns that have driven animosity toward the U.S. in recent years are still present—a perception that the U.S. acts unilaterally, opposition to the war on terror, and fears of America as a military threat.”

On other fronts, the *Los Angeles Times* reported in May a “Rasmussen Reports poll finds that 35% of likely voters want immediate U.S. troop withdrawal from the nearly 10-year-old war in Afghanistan. That's the highest favoring immediate withdrawal ever.” Significantly, 70% of Democrats “favor immediate withdrawal or a firm timetable.” Other polls show that two-thirds of Americans would favor withdrawal of all troops from both Iraq and Afghanistan.



“US Military Interventions Since WWII” by Josh MacPhee/justseeds.org

How the United States Reversed Its Policy on Bombing Civilians

by Sherwood Ross

When Adolf Hitler's Luftwaffe destroyed the Spanish town of Guernica on April 26, 1937, more than 1,650 people were killed and nearly 900 wounded. This slaughter of civilians was broadly condemned in the United States and Great Britain.

Arriving in Guernica, *New York Times* correspondent G. L. Steer reported, “The object of the bombardment seemingly was demoralization of the civilian population.” Destroyed in this historic citadel of Basque culture, “not a military objective,” were all but one of the town's churches as well as both of its hospitals. “The whole of it was a horrible sight, flaming from end to end” from a rain of high explosive bombs and incendiary projectiles. So many buildings collapsed, “the streets were long heaps of red, impenetrable ruins” and farmhouses “burned like little candles in the hills.”

Historian Robert Dallek observes in *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-45*, “In the United States prominent Americans from all walks of life and a large portion of the press joined in a denunciation of ‘the monstrous

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Leaving the war in Afghanistan

by Gwynne Dyer

“With a single bound, our hero was free,” as writers of pulp fiction used to say when they saved their hero from some implausible but inescapable peril. Barack Obama could now free himself from Afghanistan with a single bound, if he had the nerve.

The death of Osama bin Laden, founder of al-Qaeda, matters little in practical terms, but Obama could use it as a means of deflating the grossly exaggerated “terrorist threat” that legitimizes the bloated American security establishment. He could also use it to escape from the war in Afghanistan.

If he acted in the next few months, while his success in killing the terrorist-in-chief still makes him politically unassailable on military matters, he could start moving U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, and even begin to cut the Homeland Security Department down to size. His political enemies would accuse him of being “soft on defense,” but right now the accusation would not stick.

The HSD's reason for being is the “terrorist threat.” Drive home the point that bin Laden is dead, and that there has been no terrorist attack in the West at even 1/50 the scale of the 9/11 attacks for the past five years, and its budget becomes very vulnerable.

Obama promised in 2009 that the first of the 30,000 extra U.S. troops he sent to Afghanistan in that year will be withdrawn this July. It would be harder to get the remaining 70,000 American troops and the 50,000

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INSIDE: Topics include Afghanistan—pages 2-3, Libya—7, Veteran Artists/Operation Recovery—12, bin Laden—14-15, Honduras—16, We are not your soldiers—22-23, Patriotism—24 & 13; Authors include William Blum, Marjorie Cohn, Noam Chomsky, Don Gutierrez, Benjamin Ferencz, Glenn Greenwald, David Ignatius, Gary Kohls, Nadya Williams, and Howard Zinn; Also letters, poetry, and more...

All the fantasies from a culture brimming with over-romanticized "glory" of war disappear when one watches a close friend's legs blown off

Troop morale plummets in a war without purpose

MARCH FORWARD!
VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS STAND UP AGAINST WAR AND RACISM

by Michael Prysner

The Associated Press reports that soldiers and Marines in Afghanistan are suffering the highest rates of psychological problems since 2005. Similarly, troop morale is down the drain. The reason is no mystery. A military report found that up to 80 percent of troops have witnessed a friend being killed or wounded in combat.

This is a staggering number. We're indoctrinated from a young age with all the fantasies from a culture brimming with over-romanticized "glory" of war. But the fantasies disappear when one watches a close friend's legs blown off—the new "signature wound" in Afghanistan—and has to try to stop the gushing of blood by tying tourniquets around mangled flesh; or when one is powerless to do anything but watch someone die from the sheer devastation of their wounds, and has to literally pick up the pieces. This would have a devastating psychological effect on any person—even the most "Army Strong" of us. And 80 percent of us have had to endure it.

But it is much more than just the reality of combat that is responsible for plummeting morale. Human beings are capable of enduring great hardship when there is a feeling of purpose.

And what is the purpose of endlessly fighting in Afghanistan? Well,

for service members, we are told first and foremost that this is not our concern. Our job is to follow orders and trust the supreme wisdom of the politicians in Washington. They are all millionaires, so we are told they must be pretty smart! They are people like Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, whose "expert" military and foreign policy decisions come from two whole years in the Air Force (never deploying), and much of the rest of his career spent in corporate boardrooms of weapons manufacturers and oil drilling companies. Surely, it is just a coincidence that his former office buddies are making record profits. Chances are he will not have to watch any of them bleed to death in combat. Maybe that's why on his trip to Afghanistan last week he said that there was "no rush" in removing combat troops.

No good reason for war in Afghanistan

But for those of us who do look for purpose in what we are doing, what do we find? We are told that the purpose is to defeat al-Qaeda; then we hear CIA Director Leon Panetta admit that there is virtually no al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan—maybe "50-100 individuals," he says. Over 100,000 troops on the ground in a 10-year war to fight 50 individuals? That makes a lot of sense. He also says to not pay attention to the fact that al-Qaeda is in 40 other countries as well—the fight is in Afghanistan, where, as a recent study found, only 8 percent of young men have even heard of the September 11 attacks.

We are told that there is a purpose because we're "making gains" against the resistance movement in Afghanistan—that we are "winning the war." Then, an April White House report says that there is "no clear path" to defeating the insurgency. So when speaking to us, the people who have to do all the fighting and dying, the politicians say that "we are winning." But amongst themselves, in the Oval Office and halls of Congress, they say "there is no possible way to win." What a great sense of purpose they instill!

It comes from the generals, too. General Petraeus tells us that we are "reversing the momentum" of the resistance. Then, on May 21, he says that this summer will bring even higher levels of violence and "increased high-profile attacks." U.S.

casualties are at record numbers—with a 60 percent increase in loss of limbs and a 90 percent increase in wounds to genitals—and the past three months have yielded far more fatalities than any previous year. It does not sound much like "reversing" anything. It sounds like things are about to get much worse for us and our buddies. No worries for Petraeus, though, he will be safe in his office.

And, of course, we're told that we must fight and die because allowing the Taliban to regain any type of political power would be catastrophic for the Afghan people and for us here at home.

But actually, the U.S. government is desperately trying to negotiate with the Taliban leadership, offering them positions in the Afghan government—because Washington knows they cannot win the war militarily. And the Taliban will not take a power-sharing deal right now because they are winning and their morale is high, so why would they quit? For those troops who try to believe that the war will "save" Afghanistan from the Taliban, Washington's end game puts the Taliban back in government. The war for "democracy" and "national defense" is revealed to be just a political game.

Besides, the generals and politicians give the false impression it is only the Taliban who are against the foreign occupation. Again, they tell us our purpose is to defeat this one group. Then the Pentagon releases official reports estimating that there are around 1,800 different armed resistance groups fighting the occupation.

Even Army General Ben Hodges admits that 80 percent of Taliban fighters are not with the group for ideological reasons. Most, like the vast majority of Afghans, just want us out. How could anyone think "democracy" has anything to do with our purpose there?

The truth about the war

The war obviously is not about al-Qaeda or "fighting terrorism." It is just another war for "American interests"—or, American business interests—in the most resource-rich region of the world.

Our esteemed leaders admit that the war cannot be won, yet they keep sending us to die. Washington's goal is to put the Taliban on the defensive so that they will accept a deal and enter into a unity government, returning to political power—and they are using our bodies as the bargaining chips.

The people of Afghanistan are not fighting because they are "terrorists." They are fighting because

a foreign military has been bombing their villages and raiding their homes for 10 years. The Afghan people were not a party to the September 11 attacks, and many know nothing about it to this day.

The people of Afghanistan, no matter which faction of the resistance they fight with, are not our enemies; they are people struggling to survive and provide for their families, just like us.

The people who are not like us are the smirking generals and politicians who think they can treat us like pawns and give us vague and ambiguous explanations for the supposed "purpose" of our suffering.

They are lying to us. Morale is low because there is no purpose for that bloodshed. There is only one thing that can improve morale: realizing that we do not have to follow the orders of those millionaire politicians and armchair generals who are throwing our lives away.

Michael Prysner is an Iraq war veteran and a co-founder of March Forward! See MarchForward.org.

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War Crimes Times provides information on war crimes and war criminals, the need to hold war criminals accountable, the many costs of war, and the effects of our war culture on our national character. Our contributors include journalists, legal experts, poets, artists, and veterans speaking from experience. While their views may not always be entirely consistent with the mission of Veterans For Peace, their topics address the concerns of *War Crimes Times*.

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'Moral injury' as a wound of war

by John Heuer

Families and communities are justifiably proud of their young men and women who join the military. But we do not serve our veterans well when we fail to welcome them home and care for them when they return from our nation's wars.

Since the Viet Nam War, the U.S. military has achieved remarkable success in reducing battlefield deaths from extreme wounds. But the survivors of those wounds face enormous challenges in what, for many, become lifetimes of struggle with recovery issues.

One of the greatest challenges to recovering veterans is that their wounds are not always visible. Among the most common of these invisible wounds is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Another is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD was known in earlier times as "soldier's heart," "shell-shock," or "battle fatigue."

A related condition recently recognized is called "moral injury." "Moral injury can occur from what you witness or what you do," says Dr. Brett Litz, a clinical psychologist, professor and counselor for the Department of Veterans Affairs. "I've been seeing veterans for 24 years, and when people who seem well-adjusted and doing fine really talk about their war experiences, what often emerges is sadness about the loss and what they saw. That is moral injury."

According to Mark Walker, writing in the *North County Times—The Californian*, Litz and his collaborators specifically define a moral injury experience as "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."

More of our service members take their own lives during or after their military service, than are killed in action on the battle fields of Iraq and Afghanistan. But these are still casualties of war. One example of moral injury resulting in the suicide of a U.S. Army Specialist is Alyssa Peterson.

Assigned to C Company, 311th Military Intelligence Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division, Peterson was ordered to participate in detainee interrogations during which detainees were assaulted, stripped, blindfolded, and then confronted with a female interrogator. Interrogation procedures also included cramped confinement, stress position, sleep deprivation, insects placed in a confinement box, and water boarding. Ms. Peterson found that these orders from superior officers transgressed her deeply held moral and religious beliefs. She took her own life with her service weapon.

The moral health of our young men and women in uniform should be at least as important to us as the health of our communities.

John Heuer is a member of the Eisenhower chapter of VFP in the NC Triangle. He is chair of NC Peace Action ncpeaceaction.org.

Last year's Truth Commission on Conscience in War (www.conscienceinwar.org) will be followed with a conference organized by veteran service members and students at Duke Divinity School this November. Updates and information will be posted at www.ncveteransforpeace.org.

The reality is he is pursuing George Bush's wars. There's more troops in Afghanistan now than there was when he got elected. There's still 50,000 troops in Iraq. There's attacks on Pakistan. And now, of course, he's been part of a third attack on a Muslim country in 10 years: the bombing of Libya. And we oppose all of these things, and we believe that the American foreign policy isn't changing and has to change.

—British protester interviewed during President Obama's recent trip to the UK



Afghanistan

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other foreign troops out—but it is now within his reach.

Since it is politically impossible for a U.S. president to acknowledge military defeat, for half a century the default method for extracting American troops from lost wars has been to "declare a victory and leave." It was pioneered by Henry Kissinger in the Viet Nam era, it worked for the junior Bush in Iraq, and Obama could use it to get out of Afghanistan.

It just has to look like a victory of sorts until one or two years after all the American troops are gone, so that when the roof falls in, it no longer looks like the Americans' fault. Kissinger talked about the need for a "decent interval" between the departure of U.S. troops and whatever disasters might ensue in Viet Nam, and the concept applies equally to Obama and Afghanistan.

The case for getting Western troops out of Afghanistan now rests on three arguments. Firstly, that the Taliban, the Islamist radicals who governed the country until 2001 and are now fighting Western troops there, were never America's enemies. Al-Qaeda (which was almost entirely Arab in those days) abused their hospitality by planning its attacks in Afghanistan, but no Afghan has ever been involved in a terrorist attack against the West.

Secondly, the Taliban never controlled the minority areas of the country even during their five years in power, so why assume that they will conquer the whole country if Western troops leave? President Hamid Karzai's deeply corrupt and widely hated government would certainly fall, but Afghanistan's future would probably be decided, as usual, by a combination of fighting and bargaining between the major ethnic groups.

And thirdly, Western troops will obviously leave eventually. Whether they leave sooner or later, roughly the same events will happen after they go. Those events are unlikely to pose a threat to the security of any Western country—so why not leave now, and spare some tens of thousands of lives?

This last argument is of course disputed by the U.S. military, who insist (as soldiers usually do) that victory is attainable if they are only given enough resources and time. But Karzai's government is beyond salvage, and this month's strikingly successful Taliban attacks in Kandahar city discredit the claim that pro-government forces are "making progress" in "restoring security."

Western armies have fought dozens of wars in the

Third World since the European empires began to collapse 60 years ago, and they lost almost every one. The local nationalists (who sometimes calling themselves Marxists or Islamists) cannot beat the foreign armies in open battle, but they can go on fighting longer and take far higher casualties.

Afghanistan fits the model. When a delegation from Central Asia visited a U.S. base in Afghanistan, one of the delegates was a former Soviet general who had fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. He listened patiently as eager young American officers explained how new technology and a new emphasis on "winning hearts and minds" would defeat the insurgency.

The local nationalists cannot beat the foreign armies in open battle, but they can go on fighting longer and take far higher casualties.

Finally his patience snapped. "We tried all that when we were here and it didn't work then, so why should it work

now?" he asked. Answer: it won't.

Osama bin Laden's death has given Obama a chance to leave Afghanistan without humiliation. Just wait a couple of months to guard against the improbable contingency of a big terrorist revenge attack, and then start bringing the troops home. Once the Taliban are convinced that he is really leaving, they would probably even give him a "decent interval."

Will this actually happen? Probably not, for in terms of domestic U.S. politics it would be a gamble, and Barack Obama is not a gambler.

Gwynne Dyer's books include War, The Mess They Made, and Ignorant Armies. See <http://gwynnedyer.net/>



God Bless America. And its Bombs.

by William Blum

When they bombed Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, El Salvador and Nicaragua, I said nothing because I wasn't a communist.

When they bombed China, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, and the Congo, I said nothing because I didn't know about it.

When they bombed Lebanon and Grenada, I said nothing because I didn't understand it.

When they bombed Panama, I said nothing because I wasn't a drug dealer.

When they bombed Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, I said nothing because I wasn't a terrorist.

When they bombed Yugoslavia and Libya for "humanitarian" reasons, I said nothing because it sounded so honorable.

Then they bombed my house and there was no one left to speak out for me. But it didn't really matter. I was dead.

The Targets

It's become a commonplace to accuse the United States of choosing as its bombing targets only people of color, those of the Third World, or Muslims. But it must be remembered that one of the most sustained and ferocious American bombing campaigns of modern times—78 consecutive days—was carried out against the people of the former Yugoslavia: white, European, Christians. The United States is an equal-opportunity bomber. The only qualifications for a country to become a target are: (A) It poses an obstacle—could be anything—to the desires of the American Empire; (B) It is virtually defenseless against aerial attack.

NASA has announced an audacious new mission, launching a spaceship that will travel for four years to land on an asteroid, where it will collect dust from the surface and deliver the precious cargo to Earth, where scientists will then examine the material for clues to how life began. Truly the stuff of science fiction. However, I personally would regard it as a much greater accomplishment of humankind if we could put an end to America's bombings and all its wars, and teach some humility to The Holy Triumvirate—The United States, the European Union, and NATO—who recognizes no higher power and believe they literally can do whatever they want in the world, to whomever they want, for as long as they want, and call it whatever they want, like "humanitarian."

The fall of the American Empire would offer a new beginning for the long-suffering American people and the long-suffering world.

Napalm bombs explode on Viet Cong structures south of Saigon in 1965 (National Archives photo)



F/A 18 Hornet weapons test
(U.S. Navy photo)

United States bombings of other countries

It is a scandal in contemporary international law, don't forget, that while "wanton destruction of towns, cities, and villages" is a war crime of long standing, the bombing of cities from airplanes goes not only unpunished but virtually unaccused. Air bombardment is state terrorism, the terrorism of the rich. It has burned up and blasted apart more innocents in the past six decades than have all the anti-state terrorists who ever lived. Something has benumbed our consciousness against this reality. In the United States we would not consider for the presidency a man who had once thrown a bomb into a crowded restaurant, but we are happy to elect a man who once dropped bombs from airplanes that destroyed not only restaurants but the buildings that contained them and the neighborhoods that surrounded them. I went to Iraq after the Gulf war and saw for myself what the bombs did; "wanton destruction" is just the term for it.

—C. Douglas Lummis, former U.S. Marine and author of *Radical Democracy*

The above was written in 1994, before the wanton destruction generated by the bombing of Yugoslavia, another in a long list of countries the United States has bombarded since the end of World War II, which is presented below.

There appears to be something about launching bombs or missiles from afar onto cities and people that appeals to American military and political leaders. In part it has to do with a conscious desire to not risk American lives in ground combat. And in part, perhaps not entirely conscious, it has to do with not wishing to look upon the gory remains of the victims, allowing American GIs and TV viewers at home to cling to their warm fuzzy feelings about themselves, their government, and their marvelous "family values."

Washington officials are careful to distinguish between the explosives the U.S. drops from the sky and "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD), which only the officially-designated enemies (ODE) are depraved enough to use. The U.S. government speaks sternly of WMD, defining them as nuclear, chemical, and biological in nature, and "indiscriminate" (meaning their use can't be limited to military objectives), as opposed to the likes of American "precision" cruise missiles. This is indeed a shaky semantic leg to stand on, given the well-known extremely extensive damage to non-military targets, including numerous

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Bombing Civilians

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crime of Guernica,' while congressional leaders renewed their appeal for the application of the Neutrality Act to Berlin and Rome" so as to embargo the sale of munitions to Germany and Italy.

Rising in Parliament, Archibald Sinclair, the liberal leader in the House of Commons, aptly portrayed the bombing as "a deliberate effort to use air power as an instrument of terrorism." British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden said the nation "deeply deplores the bombardment of the civil population in the Spanish Civil War, wherever it may occur and whoever may be responsible." Along the same lines, Lord Cecil of Chelwood, who the *New York Times* described as the leader of "a chorus of protest in the House of Lords over the atrocity" declared, "There is no precedent in the history of civilized nations for anything like the bombing of Guernica."

But there was.

During World War I, in response to a series of French bombing raids on German cities, Germany struck back with a zeppelin bombing of Paris on March 21, 1915, which killed twenty-three and injured thirty. A similar bombing of London on May 31 killed seven and wounded thirty-five. By war's end, 670 Londoners had been killed by bombs from zeppelins and airplanes.

The British, for their part, used bombers in Egypt, Northwest India, and the Sudan early in the war, bombed Constantinople in 1917, and carried out a major strategic bombing campaign against Germany from late 1917 to late 1918 under the direction of Major General Hugh Trenchard, "the father of the Royal Air Force." According to John Keegan in *The Second World War*, Trenchard used bombing as a way to "achieve the maximum effect on morale by striking at the most sensitive part of the German population—namely the working class." Sven Lindqvist in *The History of Bombing* adds that, instead of just focusing on infrastructure targets like railway stations, his pilots were instructed to, in Trenchard's words, "drop their eggs well into the middle of the town generally."

Trenchard influenced American air commander Billy Mitchell, who claimed that bombing cities would speed the end of a conflict and was "more humane" than cannon fire and bayonets. Indeed, after the war Trenchard, Mitchell, and Italy's first air commander, Giulio Douhet, each published articles arguing for strategic bombing of industrial centers and other civilian targets as a way of destroying enemy morale in future wars.

The British quickly put those ideas to work. In 1920, they used bombers to quell the dervish uprising in East Africa led by Somali leader Mohammed Hassan, striking their decisive blow by tricking “the mad mullah” into preparing for an official visit. While Hassan, his lieutenants, and his family duly waited under a ceremonial canopy at Taleex, Trenchard’s bombers attacked, killing most of Hassan’s family and pursuing him and his followers through the desert.

For the Third Afghani war of 1919, the British bombing effort was organized by Squadron Leader Arthur “Bomber” Harris, who subsequently, in 1924 in Iraq, pioneered a new method of governance, “control without occupation,” which included dropping fire on straw-roofed huts. In his report at the end of hostilities, Harris wrote:

Where the Arab and Kurd had just begun to realize that if they could stand a little noise they could stand bombing; they now know what real bombing means, in casualties and damage ... that within forty-five minutes a full-sized village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured by four or five machines which offer them no real target, no opportunity for glory as warriors, no effective means of escape.

Because of these developments, a number of national leaders issued, in February 1923, Draft Rules on Aerial Warfare, a treaty aimed at prohibiting “aerial bombardment for the purpose of terrorizing the civilian population, of destroying or damaging private property not of military character, or of injuring non-combatants.” But it never went into effect. The primary existing international law approaching the issue remained the First Article of the Hague Convention, adopted October 18, 1907, which forbade “the bombardment by naval forces of undefended ports, towns, villages, dwellings, or buildings.” This wasn’t enough to prevent the continuation of aerial bombing of civilian populations.

Thus in 1925, in a joint French and Spanish effort to put down a Berber uprising in Morocco, American volunteers under French command bombed the city of Chechaouen (Chefchaouen), similar in size and defenselessness to Guernica. That same year, in putting down a Druse revolt, the French bombarded Damascus, Syria, with aircraft, artillery, and tanks. Then, from 1926 to 1928, United States Marines utilized air power to force a regime change in Nicaragua. Through all of this there was no public outcry.

Early in 1932, however, Japanese Admiral Kiochi Shiozawa’s bombardment of

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residences, schools, and hospitals, even from American “smart” bombs, in almost all of the bombings listed below.

Moreover, Washington does not apply the term “weapons of mass destruction” to other weapons the U.S. has regularly used, such as depleted uranium and cluster bombs, which can be, and often are, highly indiscriminate.

WMD are sometimes further defined as those whose effects linger in the environment, causing subsequent harm to people. This would certainly apply to cluster bombs, and depleted uranium weapons, the latter remaining dangerously radioactive after exploding. It would apply less to “conventional” bombs, but even with those there are unexploded bombs lying around, and the danger of damaged buildings later collapsing. But more importantly, it seems highly self-serving and specious, not to mention exceptionally difficult, to try to paint a human face on a Tomahawk Cruise missile whose payload of a thousand pounds of TNT crashes into the center of a densely-populated city, often with depleted uranium in its warhead.



These 3 children were photographed by Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) reporter in Sahat-e-Ama Hospital (Public Health Hospital) in Jalalabad. They have lost their parents in the U.S. bombardment of Karam village of Surkhrod district in Nangarhar province (south of Afghanistan) on October 11, 2001. Taliban and Arabs had their center in this village but they all had already left the village when the U.S. war planes repeatedly bombed this village. Dozens of civilians were killed and wounded in this bloody incident.

We never see the smoke and the fire, we never smell the blood, we never see the terror in the eyes of the children, whose nightmares will now feature screaming missiles from unseen terrorists, known only as Americans.

—Martin Kelley

A terrorist is someone who has a bomb but doesn't have an air force. —William Blum

William Blum granted permission to use these essays. His books include Killing Hope: U. S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II and Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower. See www.killinghope.org.

It's well-known that I used to serve in the KGB. At that time, the Soviet Union was waging a war in Afghanistan. Many of my friends served in Afghanistan. One of them was the head of the advisors group on the security bodies in Herat. One day, he went on leave, and I asked him, "Listen Sasha, how's the situation there?" And at that time, our country had a very patriotic spirit. We believed that we were doing a very good thing having this war in Afghanistan. His reply came back unexpectedly:

"You know, without my signature not a single missile or bomb attack can be fired." "So what?" said I. "I assess my success and my achievements by the number of orders that I don't sign." For me, it sounded just shocking. Can you imagine hearing that from a KGB officer at that time? I asked, "Why?" He said, "Do you know how many peaceful civilians perish because of these missile attacks, no matter what reasons are behind them?"

Sometimes I contemplate how easily decisions on using force are made today in international affairs, and it leaves me gobsmacked. And that happens against the background of all the fuss around human rights and humanism which the modern civilized world seemingly practices. Don't you see a significant contradiction here between theory, the words and deeds, the practice of international affairs? And we should do our utmost to eliminate this imbalance.

—Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin commenting on NATO's approach to bombing Libya.

The bombing list

Korea and China 1950-53 (Korean War)
Guatemala 1954
Indonesia 1958
Cuba 1959-61
Guatemala 1960
Congo 1964
Laos 1964-73
Vietnam 1961-73
Cambodia 1969-70
Guatemala 1967-69
Grenada 1983
Lebanon 1983-84 (Lebanese & Syrian targets)
Libya 1986
El Salvador 1980s
Nicaragua 1980s
Iran 1987
Panama 1989
Iraq 1991 (Persian Gulf War)
Kuwait 1991
Somalia 1993
Bosnia 1994-95
Sudan 1998
Afghanistan 1998
Yugoslavia 1999
Yemen 2002
Iraq 1991-2003 (US/UK on regular basis)
Iraq 2003-present
Afghanistan 2001-present
Pakistan 2007-present
Somalia 2007-8
Yemen 2009
Libya 2011

Plus

Iran, April 2003—hit by U.S. missiles during bombing of Iraq, killing at least one person.
Pakistan, 2002-03—bombed by U.S. planes several times as part of combat against the Taliban and other opponents of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan.
China, 1999—its heavily bombed embassy in Belgrade is legally Chinese territory, and it appears rather certain that the bombing was no accident.
France, 1986—After the French government refused the use of its air space to U.S. warplanes headed for a bombing raid on Libya, the planes were forced to take another, longer route; when they reached Libya they bombed so close to the French embassy that the building was damaged and all communication links knocked out.
Philadelphia, PA, May 13, 1985—A bomb dropped by a police helicopter burned down an entire block, some 60 homes destroyed, 11 dead, including several small children. The police, the mayor's office, and the FBI were all involved in this effort to evict a black organization called MOVE from the house they lived in.

Where Is The Humanity?

America's use of excessive force "over there"

by Donald Gutierrez

This is an updated version of an essay originally written in 2004 in response to the Bush Administration's assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq and President Bush Senior's Gulf War attack. It remains tragically relevant as President Obama wages war in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, and elsewhere. It is high time to present a side of America's wars that receives brief mention in the mass media and scarcely any ethical evaluation: Washington's "collateral-damage" bombing.

That is really not a matter I am terribly interested in.

—Colin Powell on being questioned in 1991 about Iraqi casualties

Why are Middle and Far Eastern civilian casualties committed by American forces only briefly noted in our media? When there are reports of Afghani or Pakistani or Libyan civilian deaths, they are explained as either "mistakes" or that Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were in the bombed location. The massacre of civilians by American drones and bombs continue to this day in Afghanistan and Pakistan and Yemen at an even higher rate of bombings and civilian deaths than under Bush's sponsorship. U.S. drones have killed more than 1180 civilians in Pakistan in 2010, according to Iran's Press/TV. And this April, eleven Muslim clerics, who had gathered in Brega, Libya, to pray for peace, were killed by NATO bombing.

The Pentagon claims such "collateral damage" is inevitable in war. Yet it also insists it strenuously avoids collateral damage and mainly practices surgical bombing. Such bombing, however, is impossible—a claim asserted by authorities like Ramsey Clark, William Blum, and Noam Chomsky who point out that the United States has dropped cluster bombs in Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan. Further, Gulf War air commander General Charles A. Horner admitted that American planes intentionally bombed civilian infrastructure in Kosovo in order to motivate civilians to rise against their rulers.

It is generally accepted that a nation at war, especially its military, is not humanely concerned about the fate of the enemy, military or civilian. That perspective overlooks another one usually ignored: that international covenants state that the commanders of opposing warring forces are responsible for achieving their military goals with as little harm to the enemy forces as possible and that the military leaders of the victorious side should be concerned about casualties on *both* sides. This latter position not only contrasts sharply with Colin Powell's statement in the epigraph above; it also suggests a standard of warfare underlining America's alienation from humane standards of war conduct.

Public attitudes towards war ethics are generally shaped by a nation's leaders and the mass media. If those two institutions can whip up enough fear and hatred in the country towards the foe, such conditioning will make it easy for Washington to commit such war crimes as Ramsey Clark indicates occurred in the Gulf War: "...killing tens of thousands of essentially defenseless soldiers...; burying soldiers alive; using illegal weapons; disrespect for the dead and many others."

Clark asserts that these crimes violate not only the Hague Convention but also the Nuremberg Charter and the Geneva Conventions and Protocols.

The United States is obviously not the only major violator of

those ethical international agreements concerning humane treatment of the enemy in wartime. However, for decades it has been extraordinarily destructive towards both military personnel and civilians. In 1998, according to the Pentagon, the United States flew 109,876 sorties over Iraq, and B-52s dropped 40,000 pounds of bombs during *each* carpet-bombing sortie. According to Clark, this included "schools, hospitals, bridges, cement plants, TV and radio stations, and railway depots, shops, restaurants, and homes." The genocidal 12-year sanction by the United States against Iraq clearly constituted violations of civilian protection guaranteed by war-ethics conventions. (In 2009, Senator Hillary Clinton, while running for the presidency, threatened to "nuke" Iran if it dared attack Israel. Nuclear bombing of course exterminates entire civilian populations.)

Further, the American use of weaponry like cluster bombs, and the carpet bombing and depleted-uranium shelling of Yugoslavia, Iraq, and now Afghanistan constitute even more evidence of such violation. According to Blum, President Clinton bombed the people of Yugoslavia for 78 days and nights, "taking the lives of many hundreds of civilians and producing one of the greatest ecological catastrophes in history...."

Citing remarks about the enemy made by key American military leaders is apropos here. During the NATO aerial attack on Yugoslavia, General Wesley Clark shouted, "I've got to get the maximum violence out of this campaign—now!" (Blum). And

"I thought it would be fine if the ones who ordered the bombing and the ones who did the bombing would walk on the ground sometime and see what it is like."

of course many American presidents have been responsible for (undeclared) air wars against sovereign states involving the deaths and maiming of millions and the devastation of their civilian infrastructure.

Journalist Martha Gellhorn once said "I thought it would be fine if the ones who ordered the bombing and the ones who did the bombing would walk on the ground sometime and see what it is like." Howard Zinn in a *Nation* article entitled "The Others" provided that closer look at the "collateral damage" caused by American bombing in Afghanistan. A family in the village of Madoo states that 15 houses were bombed. The villagers claim 30 people died. As a villager testifies, "There were heads missing and arms blown off..." In the town of Kabul, a bomb hits a "flimsy mud-brick house, blowing apart seven children as they ate breakfast with their father..." According to the journalist Alexander Cockburn, "the U.S. bombardment of Bala Baluk [in 2009] yielded 140 dead villagers torn apart by high explosives including 93 children." The Pentagon's argument that these villages harbored Taliban, whether true or false, implicitly assumes the right in attacking the enemy to murder a lot of civilians, including children.

Climactically, in one village (Kama Ado), B-52s dropped dozens of bombs, killing 115 men, women and children. The Defense Department insists that "It just didn't happen." Even trees are not spared. "Our trees," says Muhammed Tahir, "are our only shelter from the cold and wind. The trees have been bombed.

The American military command sent a communication to Fallujah demanding the handover of the people who mutilated the four bodies. That's no problem. We are ready to hand over those four but we have a demand in return. They should turn over to us the pilots who bombed the civilian neighborhoods of Fallujah.

—unnamed Iraqi speaking in the film *Meeting Resistance*



Arabian Gulf (Nov. 9, 2004) — Aviation Ordnancemen, assigned to the "Rampagers" of Strike Fighter Squadron Eight Three (VFA-83), finish loading two of the Navy's latest Satellite Guided Bombs, the GBU-38, aboard the aircraft carrier USS *John F. Kennedy*. The GBU-38 is a 500-pound Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM is a guidance kit that converts existing unguided bombs into precision-guided "smart" munitions; the tail section contains an inertial navigational system and a global positioning system) that uses a standard Mk-82 bomb, and was developed for precision bombing in urban warfare. Carrier Air Wing Seventeen (CVW-17) aircraft aboard *Kennedy* are supporting ground troops in Fallujah, Iraq, under Operation Al Fajr (New Dawn). (U.S. Navy photo)

Our waterfall, our only source of water—they bombed it. Where is the humanity?"

Being poorly informed by our leaders and our media about the casualties on the "other" side denies Americans a sense of the "Shock-and-Awe" bloody reality of the experience of Afghan, Iraqi, Yugoslavian, Yemeni, and other victims of Washington's enormous violence. Though one is reminded that al-Qaidan terrorists have shown themselves brutally indifferent to American civilian casualties, these charges clearly do not apply to the aforementioned Afghan civilian "casualties." Moreover, Washington, according to Chomsky, has likely used middle and Far East countries as testing grounds for its high-tech ordnance.

What will it take to make the average American realize that in modern wars, it is mainly civilians who get blown to bits by bombs, and that the civilians (usually non-White) obliterated are as vulnerable to pain, terror and grief as any American? And what can be done to better inform its citizens of, and empower them against, massive violence and agony perpetrated by Washington abroad and downplayed by our media? Surely, more September Elevens can be avoided if America stopped placing its geopolitical "national interests" abroad above everything else.

Don Gutierrez, a professor emeritus of English, is the author of numerous essays and several books. The working title of his current book in progress is Feeling the Unthinkable: Essays in Social Justice. It will be published in 2012 and will include an expanded version of this essay.

The illegal war in Libya

by Glenn Greenwald

The President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.

—candidate Barack Obama, December, 2007

No more ignoring the law when it's inconvenient. That is not who we are.... We will again set an example for the world that the law is not subject to the whims of stubborn rulers.

—candidate Barack Obama, August 1, 2007

When President Obama ordered the U.S. military to wage war in Libya without Congressional approval (even though, to use his words, it did “not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation”), the administration and its defenders claimed he had legal authority to do so for two reasons: (1) the War Powers Resolution of 1973 (WPR) authorizes the President to wage war for 60 days without Congress, and (2) the “time-limited, well defined and discrete” nature of the mission meant that it was not really a “war” under the Constitution (Deputy NSA Adviser Ben Rhodes and the Obama OLC). Those claims were specious from the start, but are unquestionably inapplicable now.

From the start, the WPR provided no such authority. Section 1541(c) explicitly states that the war-making rights conferred by the statute apply only to “a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.” That’s why Yale Law Professor Bruce Ackerman—in an article in *Foreign Policy* entitled “Obama’s Unconstitutional War”—wrote when the war started that the “The War Powers Resolution doesn’t authorize a single day of Libyan bombing” and that “in taking the country into a war with Libya, Barack Obama’s administration is breaking new ground in its construction of an imperial presidency.”

Ackerman detailed why Obama’s sweeping claims of war powers exceeded that even of past controversial precedents, such as Clinton’s 1999 bombing of Kosovo, which at least had the excuse that Congress authorized funding for it: “but Obama can’t even take advantage of this same desperate expedient, since Congress has appropriated no funds for the Libyan war.” *The Nation*’s John Nichols explained that Obama’s unilateral decision “was a violation of the provision in the founding document that requires the executive to attain authorization from Congress before launching military adventures abroad.” Put simply, as Daniel Larison concluded in an excellent analysis last week, “the war was illegal from the start.”

But even for those who chose to cling to the fiction that the presidential war in Libya was authorized by the WPR, that fiction is now coming to a crashing end. Friday [May 20] will mark the 60th day of the war without Congress, and there are no plans for authorization to be provided. By all appearances, the White House isn’t even bothering to pretend to seek one. A handful of GOP Senators—ones who of course showed no interest whatsoever during the Bush years in demanding presidential adherence to the law—are now demanding a vote on Libya, but it’s highly likely that the Democrats who control the Senate won’t allow one. Instead, the law will simply be ignored by the President who declared, when bashing George Bush on the campaign trail to throngs of cheering progressives: “No more ignoring the law when it’s inconvenient. That is not who we are.”

One of the questions often asked during the Bush years was why Bush/Cheney were so brazen in violating Congressional statutes given that the post-9/11 Congress would have given them whatever authority they wanted to do whatever they wanted; the answer was clear: because they wanted to establish the “principle” that they had the power to do anything without getting anyone’s permission, including the American people’s through their Congress or the courts (“These decisions, under our Constitution, are for the President alone to make,” decreed John Yoo in his iconic September 25, 2001 memo).

The same is true of Obama here. There is little doubt that Congress would subserviently comply—as it always does—with presidential demands for war authorization. The Obama White House is simply choosing not to seek it because Obama officials want to bolster the unrestrained power of the imperial presidency entrenched by Dick Cheney, David Addington, and John Yoo, and because that route avoids a messy debate about purpose, cost and exit strategy. Instead—just as Bush/Cheney invented theories to justify even direct violation of Congressional law (e.g., the AUMF implicitly allowed us to eavesdrop on Americans without warrants in violation of FISA)—the Obama administration is now, as the *New York Times* put it, “trying to come up with a plausible theory for why continued participation by the United States does not violate the law.” Those potential “theories”—that the U.S. can stop bombing for a moment, claim the war ended, and then resume bombing on the basis that the momentary pause reset the WPR clock, or that NATO’s command means the U.S. is not really at war—are ludicrous on their face, but highlight how eager the White House is to avoid seeking a vote that might dilute the President’s seized unilateral war-making power.

It was equally clear from the start that this Orwellian-named “kinetic humanitarian action” was, in fact, a “war” in every sense, including the Constitutional sense, but that’s especially undeniable now. While the President, in his after-the-fact speech justifying the war, pledged that “broadening our military mission to include regime change would be a mistake,” it is now clear that is exactly what is happening. “Regime change” quickly became the explicit goal. NATO has repeatedly sought to kill Gaddafi with bombs; one attack killed his youngest son and three grandchildren and almost killed his whole family including his wife, forcing them to flee to Tunisia. If sending your armed forces and its AC-130s and drones to another country to attack that country’s military and kill its leader isn’t a “war,” then nothing is.

It’s extraordinary how rapidly and brazenly the initial claims about the war were discarded. The notion that we were simply going to establish a no-fly zone to protect civilians in Benghazi behind the leadership of the Arab League—remember all that?—is a faded, laughable memory. Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, originally supportive of the mission in Libya, explained the obvious about NATO in an interview this week: “they’ve crossed a line and are now part of the civil war and fighting on one side of the civil war.” One can now say many things about this war; that it is “time-limited, well defined and discrete” is



U.S. Air Force B-2 Spirit stealth bomber aircraft returns from a mission in supporting the no-fly zone over Libya, March 20, 2011, as part of Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn. (USAF photo)

most assuredly not among them.

The excuses offered to justify or excuse all of this are unpersuasive in the extreme. Some point out that Congress is content with having the President seize its war-making powers; that’s true, but the same was

true of Congress under both parties in the face of Bush/Cheney radicalism (Dan Froomkin wrote in 2007 that “historians looking back on the Bush presidency may well wonder if Congress actually existed”). Nobody back then suggested this inaction excused Bush’s lawbreaking. That Congress acquiesces simply means—like Obama’s protection of Bush crimes—that the President will get away with this lawbreaking, not that it’s justified.

Nor do the instances of past illegal wars provide any excuse. Past lawlessness does not justify current lawlessness. Beyond that, Professors Ackerman and Hathaway argue today that Libya will create an all new and dangerous precedent for the imperial presidency:

Once Obama crosses the Rubicon, future presidents will simply cite Libya when they unilaterally commit America to far more ambitious NATO campaigns.

Make no mistake: **Obama is breaking new ground, moving decisively beyond his predecessors.** George W. Bush gained congressional approval for his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Bill Clinton acted unilaterally when he committed American forces to NATO’s bombing campaign in Kosovo, but he persuaded Congress to approve special funding for his initiative within 60 days. And the entire operation ended on its 78th day.

In contrast, Congress has not granted special funds for Libya since the bombing began, and the campaign is likely to continue beyond the 30-day limit set for termination of all operations....

If nothing happens, history will say that the War Powers Act was condemned to a quiet death by a president who had solemnly pledged, on the campaign trail, to put an end to indiscriminate warmaking.

That the American people must approve of wars through their Congress is no legalistic technicality (and as my very British NYU Criminal Law Professor, Graham Hughes, dryly said of his arrival in the U.S. and initial exposure to TV debates about criminal defendants “getting off on technicalities”: “I had never before been in a country where people refer to their Constitution as a ‘technicality’”). The whole point of the Article I, Section 8 requirement is that democratic debate and consent is necessary to prevent Presidents from starting self-aggrandizing wars without real limits on duration, cost and purpose; the WPR was enacted after the Vietnam debacle to prevent its repeat.

This war, without Congressional authorization, is illegal in every relevant sense: Constitutionally and statutorily. That was true from its start but is especially true now. If one wants to take the position that it’s not particularly important or damaging for a President to illegally start and sustain protracted wars on his own, then it’s hard to see what would be important. That is the ultimate expression of a lawless empire.

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A June 15 suit filed by 10 Congressmen charges that President Obama violated the War Powers Act in the war against Libya. The White House claims it is “humanitarian” bombing, not war. See WarCrimesTimes.org.

The Myth of Hiroshima and the Glorification of American Militarism

by Gary Kohls, MD

This August 6, 2011 is the 66th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, an event that has been mythologized by millions of Americans who were happy that the awful war was finally over. Of course most Americans were also willing to swallow the post-war propaganda about the end of the war, false information that was orchestrated by a multitude of war-justifying militarists, starting with General Douglas MacArthur and his attempts at total censorship of post-war information coming out of Japan, especially the photographic documentation of the horrors of the atomic bombs.

Back in 1995, the Smithsonian Institute was preparing an honest, historically-accurate display dealing with the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings. Amid much right-wing reactionary wrangling from various ultrapatriotic veterans groups all the way up to the Newt Gingrich/GOP-dominated Congress at the time, the Smithsonian was forced to eliminate all of the painful but contextually important parts of the story, especially the Japanese civilian stories. So again we had another example of politically powerful conservative groups heavily influencing public policy—and altering real history—because they were afraid of revealing unpleasant and potentially “unpatriotic” historical truths.

The historians did have a gun to their heads, of course, but in the melee, the mainstream media—and therefore the public—ignored a vital historical point. And that is this: The war could have ended quickly without the atomic bombs, and therefore there would not have been a bloody American land invasion of Japan as the subsequent propaganda campaigns (that tried to justify the use of atomic weapons of mass destruction on civilian populations) had claimed. American intelligence, with the full knowledge of President Truman, was fully aware of Japan's desperate search for ways to honorably surrender weeks before Truman gave the fateful order to incinerate, without warning, the nearly 100,000 innocent and unarmed civilians of Hiroshima.

American intelligence data, revealed in the 1980s, shows that the contingency plans for a large-scale U.S. invasion (planned for no sooner than November 1, 1945) would have been unnecessary. Japan was working on peace negotiations with the Allies through its Moscow ambassador as early as April of 1945. Truman

knew of these developments, the U.S. having broken the Japanese code years earlier, and all of Japan's military and diplomatic messages were being intercepted. On July 13, 1945, Foreign Minister Togo said: “Unconditional surrender (giving up all sovereignty) is the only obstacle to peace.”

Truman knew this, and the war could have ended through diplomacy by simply conceding a post-war figurehead position for the emperor—who was regarded as a deity in Japan. That reasonable concession was—seemingly illogically—refused by the U.S. in their demand for unconditional surrender. Still, the Japanese continued searching for an honorable peace through negotiations but the devastating bombs were dropped anyway. And after the war, interestingly, the emperor was allowed to remain in place as spiritual head of Japan, the very condition that made the Japanese leadership refuse to accept the surrender terms of the Potsdam Declaration. So the questions that need answering to figure out what really happened are two. 1) Why did the U.S. refuse to accept Japan's only concession concerning their surrender?; and 2) With the war already at an end without needing to use the bombs, what were the reasons to proceed?

Shortly after WWII, military analyst Hanson Baldwin wrote: “The Japanese, in a military sense, were in a hopeless strategic situation by the time the Potsdam Declaration (insisting on Japan's unconditional surrender) was made on July 26, 1945.”

We need to start owning up to the innumerable international war crimes that have been orchestrated in our names by the multitude of war profiteers, both foreign and domestic, that have been in positions of power and influence during the last 65 plus years. And then we need to go to the streets...

Admiral William Leahy, top military aide to President Truman, said in his war memoirs, *I Was There*: “It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons. My own feeling is that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages.”

And General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a personal visit to President Truman a couple of weeks before the bombings, urged him not to use the atomic bomb. Eisenhower said: “It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing . . . to use the atomic bomb, to kill and terrorize civilians, without even attempting [negotiations], was a double crime.”

Truman proceeded with the plans to use the bombs, but he never officially ordered the Nagasaki bomb that followed Hiroshima only three days later. There are a number of factors that contributed to Truman's decisions:

1) The U.S. had made a huge investment in time, mind and money (\$2,000,000,000 in 1940 dollars) to produce three bombs,



Hiroshima August 7, 1945
(U.S. Army photo by
Enola Gay tail gunner S/Sgt. George R. “Bob” Caron)

and there was no inclination—and no guts—to stop the momentum.

2) The U.S. military and political leadership—as did many ordinary Americans—had a tremendous appetite for revenge because of Pearl Harbor. Mercy wasn't in the mindset of the U.S. military or the war-weary populace, and the missions against Hiroshima and Nagasaki were accepted—no questions asked—by those who only knew the sanitized, national security version of events.

3) The fissionable material in Hiroshima's bomb was uranium and Nagasaki's was plutonium. Scientific curiosity was a significant factor that pushed the project to its completion, even if the peace was at hand. The Manhattan Project scientists and U.S. Army director of the project, Leslie Groves, wanted answers to the multitude of questions raised by the project, including “What would happen if an entire city was leveled by a single nuclear bomb?” The decision to use both bombs had been made well in advance of August 9. The three-day interval was unconscionably short. Japan's communications and transportation capabilities were in shambles, and no one, not even the U.S. military, much less the Japanese high command, fully understood what had happened at Hiroshima on August 6. The Manhattan Project was so top secret that even General Douglas MacArthur, commanding general of the entire Pacific theatre, had been kept out of the loop about the existence of the bombs until five days before Hiroshima.

4) The Russians had proclaimed their intent to enter the war with Japan 90 days after V-E Day (Victory in Europe, May 8), which would have been August 8, two days after Hiroshima was bombed. Indeed, Russia did declare war on Japan on August 8 and was advancing eastward across Manchuria when Nagasaki was incinerated. The U.S. didn't want Japan surrendering to Russia (soon to be fingered as a future enemy) so the first nuclear “messages” of the infantile Cold War were sent. Russia indeed received far less of the spoils of war than they had anticipated, and the two superpowers were instantly mired in the Cold War stalemate that eventually resulted in their mutual moral and economic bankruptcies that happened a couple of generations later.



Hiroshima after the bomb—autographed by *Enola Gay* pilot Paul Tibbets.
(U.S. Navy photo)

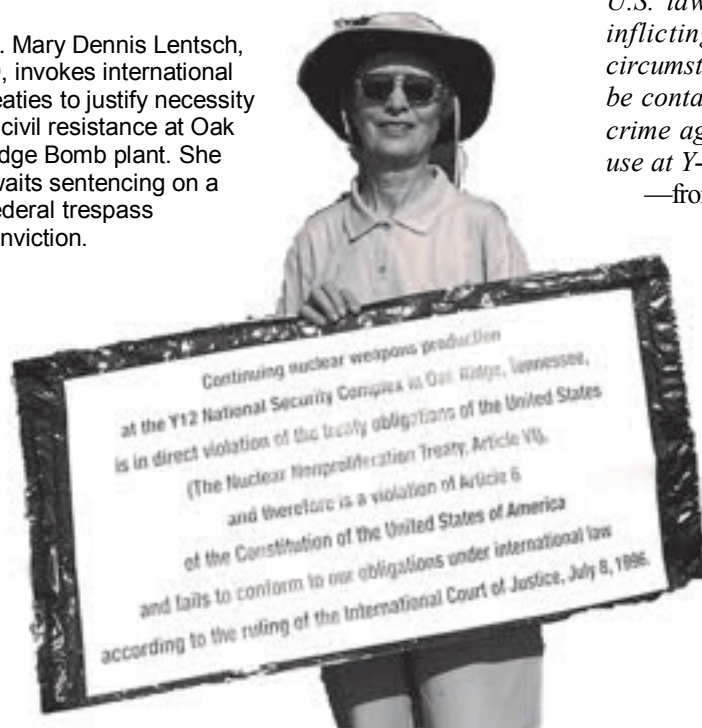
An estimated 80,000 innocent and defenseless civilians, plus 20,000 essentially weaponless young Japanese conscripts died instantly in the Hiroshima bombing. Hundreds of thousands more suffered slow deaths from agonizing burns, radiation sickness, leukemias, and infections for the rest of their shortened lives, and generations of the survivor's progeny inherited horrible radiation-induced illnesses, cancers and premature deaths. What has been covered up is the fact that 12 American Navy pilots, their existence well known to the U.S. command, were instantly incinerated in the Hiroshima jail on August 6.

The 75,000 Nagasaki victims who died in the August 9 carnage were virtually all civilians, except for the inhabitants of an allied POW camp near Nagasaki's ground zero.

They were incinerated, carbonized, or instantly vaporized by a scientific experiment carried out by obedient, unaware scientists and soldiers who were just doing their duty. The War Dept. knew of the existence of the POWs *and*, when reminded, simply replied: "Targets previously assigned for Centerboard (code name for the Kokura/Nagasaki mission) remain unchanged."

So the official version of the end of the war in the Pacific contained a new batch of myths that took their place among the long lists of myths that Americans are continuously fed by our corporate, military, political and media opinion leaders, the gruesomeness of war being altered to glorification in the process. Some of the other censored-out realities, of course, include what really happened in the U.S. military invasions and occupations of the countries of North Korea, Iran, Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Lebanon, Granada, Panama, the Philippines, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Colombia, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc., etc. This list doesn't cover the uncountable Pentagon/CIA covert operations and assassination plots in the rest of the known world, where 135 nations host American military bases (usually paid for by bribery or threats of economic violence).

Sr. Mary Dennis Lentsch, 79, invokes international treaties to justify necessity of civil resistance at Oak Ridge Bomb plant. She awaits sentencing on a Federal trespass conviction.



Atomic bomb victim. Original caption: "The patient's skin is burned in a pattern corresponding to the dark portions of a kimono worn at the time of the explosion." (photo from U.S. National Archives)

But somehow most of us still hang on to our shaky "My country right or wrong" patriotism, desperately wanting to believe the cunningly -orchestrated myths that say that our nation only works for peace, justice, equality, liberty, and spreading democracy while being blind to the obvious reality that the U.S. mainly supports right-wing, quasi-military dictatorships that make the world safe for exploitive predatory capitalism.

While it is true that the U.S. military has faced down the occasional despot, with necessary sacrifice from dead and dying American soldiers, more often than not our methods of rationalizing the atrocities of war are identical to those of the "godless communists" or "evil empires" on the other side of the battle line. August 6 and 9, 1945 are just two more examples of the brutalization of a "total war" political agenda, which is always accompanied by the unforgivable human slaughter that is euphemistically called "collateral damage" and "friendly fire."

It might already be too late for Americans to stand up for real justice and real peace to effectively confront the usually well-hidden ruling elite. Rather than being silent about the bankrupting and insurgency-provoking war-making that our conscienceless multinational corporations (with the eager assistance of the Pentagon and the heavily-lobbied Congress) are provoking all over the planet, people of conscience need to start acknowledging, and then courageously teaching, the whole truth of history. We need to start owning up to the innumerable international war crimes that have been orchestrated in our names by the multitude of war profiteers, both foreign and domestic, that have been in positions of power and influence during the last 65 plus years. And then we need to go to the streets, publicly protesting and courageously confronting the criminals and their Hiroshima-caliber crimes against humanity.

Doing what is right for the whole of humanity for a change, rather than just doing what is advantageous for our over-privileged, over-consumptive, and unsustainable American way of life, would be real honor, real patriotism and an essential start toward real peace.

Dr. Kohls is a retired physician who practiced holistic mental health care, dealing extensively with the totally preventable and difficult-to-treat reality known as post-traumatic stress disorder, which is always a consequence of violence. He is also a student of European fascism and writes about issues of war, peace, mental health, brain nutrition, the dangers of psychotropic drugs, and the power and practicality of nonviolent resistance movements.

Resistance to Tennessee's "Secret City" Y-12 Bomb Plant Continues

by Clare Hanrahan

Soldiers in camouflage were dispatched from the federal side of the barbed-wire fence after the April 16, 2011 rally at the gates of the Y-12 bomb plant in Oak Ridge, TN. Their mission? To untie the hundreds of paper peace cranes fluttering along the length of the perimeter fence.

We who marched to the gates of this hellish place through the streets of Tennessee's "secret city," came from throughout the Southeast and as far as Michigan, continuing a 22-year history of vigils and actions calling for an end to nuclear weapons production in Oak Ridge and to advocate for responsible environmental restoration. Protestors were perhaps outnumbered by the Wakenhut security forces on alert behind the fence. WSI-Oak Ridge, under DOE and NSA contracts to secure the 33,725 acre Oak Ridge Reservation, employs nearly one thousand personnel—and an arsenal including Gatling guns capable of firing 3,000 rounds a minute using 7.62 mm ammunition.

U.S. law and international law as U.S. law prohibit threatening or inflicting indiscriminate harm and unnecessary suffering, in any circumstance in war or peace. Because all nuclear weapons "cannot be contained in space or time," any use would, ipso facto, constitute a crime against humanity and a war crime including those prepared for use at Y-12.

—from a statement prepared by The Nuclear Resister for the July 2010 action

The W-76 and W-76-1 thermonuclear secondaries produced at Y-12 are designed to unleash 100 kilotons of uncontrollable and indiscriminate heat, blast, and radiation—six times more than the Hiroshima bomb—according to a 2009 report in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.

As we approached the gates, with Japanese Buddhist drumming and chanting, an officer with the bomb plant security detail issued his gruff order: "You have five seconds to vacate the road or you will be arrested." This time, the protesters complied—a contrast with the July 2010 civil resistance there when 37 persons were arrested declaring "Independence from Nuclear Terrorism." Twelve were convicted of federal trespass on May 11 in Knoxville and eight of these civil resisters remain in custody in county jails awaiting sentencing. They face up to one year in prison and \$100,000 fine.

"The no trespass law at Y12 is one of a web of laws used to protect Weapons of Mass Destruction," defendant Steve Baggary testified. "The laws and the courts defend weapons for doomsday. The law is in the service of death. My action at Y12 was to willfully do good in the service of life."

For more information: www.orepa.org and www.nukeresister.org. Photos by Clare Hanrahan.



The Bomb — two excerpts from Howard Zinn's last book

Only with those scenes [graphic descriptions of the bombs' effects] in our minds can we judge the distressingly cold arguments that go on now, sixty-five years later, about whether it was right to send those planes out on those two mornings in August of 1945. That this is arguable is a devastating commentary on our moral culture.

And yet, the arguments must be met, because they continue to be advanced, in one form or another, every time the organized power of the state is used to commit an atrocity—whether the setting is Auschwitz or My Lai or Waco, Texas, or Philadelphia, where families in the MOVE organization were firebombed by the police.

When private bands of fanatics commit atrocities we call them “terrorists,” which they are, and have no trouble dismissing their reasons. But when governments do the same, and on a much larger scale, the word “terrorism” is not used, and we consider it a sign of our democracy that the acts become subject to debate. If the word “terrorism” has a useful meaning (and I believe it does, because it marks an act as intolerable, since it involves the indiscriminate use of violence against human beings for some political purpose), then it applies exactly to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The sociologist Kai Erikson, reviewing the report by the Japanese team of scientists, wrote:

The attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not “combat” in any of the ways that word is normally used. Nor were they primarily attempts to destroy military targets, for the two cities had been chosen not despite but because they had a high density of civilian housing. Whether the intended audience was Russian or Japanese or a combination of both, then the attacks were to be a show, a display, a demonstration. The question is: What kind of mood does a fundamentally decent people have to be in, what kind of moral arrangements must it make, before it is willing to annihilate as many as a quarter of a million people for the sake of making a point?

....That is a question not just about some past and irretrievable event involving someone else, but about all of us, living today in the midst of outrages different in detail but morally equivalent to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is about the accumulation by nations (ours being first) of atomic weapons a thousand times more deadly, ten thousand times more numerous, than those first bombs. It is about the expenditure each year of a trillion dollars for these and what are soberly called “conventional” weapons, while fourteen million children die each year for lack of food or medical care.

No one seemed conscious of the irony—that one of the reasons for the general indignation against the Fascist powers was their history of indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations. Italy had bombed civilians in Ethiopia in its conquest of that country in 1935. Japan had bombed Shanghai, Nanking, and other Chinese cities. Germany and Italy had bombed Madrid, Guernica, and other Spanish cities in that country's civil war. At the start of World War II, Nazi planes dropped bombs on the civilian populations of Rotterdam in Holland, and Coventry in England.

Franklin D. Roosevelt described these bombings as “inhuman barbarism that has profoundly shocked the conscious of humanity.” But very soon, the United States and Britain were doing the same thing, and on a far larger scale. The Allied leaders met in Casablanca in January 1943 and agreed on massive air attacks to achieve “the destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial, and economic system and the undermining of the morale of the German people to the point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.”

This euphemism—“undermining of the morale”—was another way of saying that the mass killing of ordinary civilians by carpet-bombing was now an important strategy of the war. Once used in World War II, it would become generally accepted after the war, even as nations were dutifully signing on to the U.N. Charter pledging to end “the scourge of war.” It would become American policy in Korea, in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

In short, terrorism, condemned by governments when conducted by nationalist or religious extremists, was now being adopted as official policy.

Howard Zinn Memorial Fund

Howard Zinn flew bombing missions for the United States in World War II. After his military experience, he dedicated his life to eliminating war and promoting peace and justice. He was a devoted member of Veterans For Peace for over twenty-three years. The **Howard Zinn Memorial Fund** has been named in his memory to ensure that his legacy will continue through Veterans For Peace projects, services, and outreach.

Learn more and contribute at veteranforpeace.org.

Bombing Civilians

(Continued from page 5)

Shanghai, China—an attack which claimed thousands of civilian lives—brought a “literal avalanche of denunciation” upon Japan, observed the *New York Times*. Stella Dong writes in *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* that the carnage caused Americans “to view the Japanese as ‘butchers’ and ‘murderers.’”

Beginning in August 1937, when Japan again bombed Shanghai, it was, as David McCullough writes in *Truman*, “viewed as an atrocity of the most appalling kind.” The autobiography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's secretary of state, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, says:

The League of Nations Advisory Committee, in resolution adopted September 27, solemnly condemned the bombing of open towns in China by Japanese planes and declared that “no excuse can be made for such acts which have aroused horror and indignation throughout the world.” In a statement the following day we at the State Department supported this finding and said we held “the view that any general bombing of an extensive area wherein there resides a large populace engaged in peaceful pursuits is unwarranted and contrary to principles of law and of humanity.”

Between these two attacks on Shanghai, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini's pilots commenced raining mustard gas on innocent Ethiopians in 1935. In his futile appeal to the League of Nations in June 1936, Emperor Haile Selassie denounced Italy's bombings as “a refinement of barbarism.” He recounted how “soldiers, women, children, cattle, rivers, lakes and pastures were drenched continually with this deadly rain.... In tens of thousands, the victims of the Italian mustard gas fell.” This was followed in April 1937 by the German attack on Guernica.

Only as a result of the combined effect of all these atrocities did the League of Nations act. On September 30, 1938, a unanimous resolution was passed to outlaw “the intentional bombing of civilian populations.” Then, on September 1, 1939, at the outbreak of World War II, U.S. President Roosevelt beseeched the belligerents to refrain from the “inhuman barbarism” of bombing civilian centers, acts which had “sickened the hearts of every civilized man and woman,” and “profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity.” In response, Hitler pledged he would confine his air arm to attacking only military targets. And British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain asserted, “Britain will never resort to the deliberate attack on women and children, and other civilians for the purpose of mere terrorism.”

But all these ideals and pledges would soon be scrapped.

As early as May 11, 1940, the British War Cabinet approved “indiscriminate” bombing of civilian objectives. But it wasn't until August 24 of that year that the abandonment of humane pretense got fully underway. Hitler's Luftwaffe had accidentally bombed East London, triggering an RAF reprisal against Berlin the following night, which in turn prompted Hitler, in Keegan's words, to “take the gloves off.” Hitler required little encouragement to do so; his pilots



German victims of Allied bombing in WWII

had already killed thousands of civilians in Spain, Poland, and Holland.

So the Luftwaffe and Bomber Command exchanged raids on population centers. After the British struck Munich, Germany, on November 8 the Luftwaffe hit Coventry, England. The British then struck Mannheim. And on December 29, Luftwaffe bombers ignited 1,500 fires in London.

After that, British MP Harold Nicolson wrote in his diary that popular feeling was growing that “similar treatment of the Germans is the only thing they will understand.” Indeed, American journalist Quentin Reynolds sensed “a new and intensified hatred of Germany in the people of London.”

So on February 14, 1941, according to Keegan:

The [British] Air Staff issued a directive emphasizing that henceforward operations “should now be focused on the morale of the enemy civilian population and in particular of industrial workers.” Lest this point not be taken, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal wrote the following day: “I suppose it is clear that the new aiming points are to be the built-up [residential] areas, not, for instance, the dockyards or aircraft factories.”

Then on July 8, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote, “There is one thing that will bring [Hitler] down, and that is an absolutely devastating exterminating attack by very heavy bombers from this country upon the Nazi homeland.” Note the use of the word exterminating, as if Germany’s civilian population were so many vermin.

In February 1942, the goal of pulverizing German cities was further advanced with the appointment of Chief Air Marshal Arthur “Bomber” Harris to head Bomber Command. James L. Stokesbury, in *A Short History of Air Power*, writes:

Abandoning the futile attempt to strike at individual targets, they [the British] said, “operations should now be focused on the morale of the enemy civil population.” This meant adoption of what the British chose to call area bombing and the Germans called terror bombing. It was a conscious, albeit supposedly temporary, acceptance of the thesis that if you could not hit the German worker’s factory, you could lessen his efficiency by bombing him out of his house.

In this spirit, on March 28 Harris commenced an offensive that targeted German residential areas, hitting Lubeck with incendiary bombs at night. In May, Bomber Command struck Cologne, destroying nearly 20,000 homes, killing five hundred citizens, and driving almost half a million people into the streets. According to Stokesbury, Churchill wired Bomber Command his congratulations for a raid that was a “herald” of things to come.

In July, Bomber Command struck Hamburg’s residential areas, triggering a firestorm in which civilians, even in underground shelters, were incinerated by flames moving at hurricane force speeds of 150 miles an hour, generating temperatures of 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit. The bombers left behind “6,000 acres of smoking ashes and rubble, 41,800 people killed, and another 37,000 injured,” Stokesbury reports.

By contrast, the United States during this time was still maintaining its original official policy. For example, General James Doolittle, in his autobiography, *I Could Never Be So Lucky Again*—significantly in the portion of the book devoted to his April 18, 1942, surprise raid on Japan—pointedly declares his opposition to bombing civilians:

You guys burnt the place down, turned it into a single column of flame. More people died there in the firestorm, in that one big flame, than died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr on the firebombing of Dresden

One pilot asked me if they should deliberately head for residential areas to drop their incendiaries. I said, “Definitely not! You are to look for and aim at military targets only, such as war industries, ship-building facilities, power plants, and the like. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by attacking residential areas.”

And even though, at their Casablanca conference in January 1943, Churchill and Roosevelt agreed on a strategic bombing offensive that included reducing the morale of the German people “to the point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened,” the United States clung for the time being to its policy of destroying military targets only.

Germany’s Inspector General of Fire Prevention Hans Rumpf makes the distinction between initial British and American strategies in his 1963 book, *The Bombing of Germany*, writing that the British night attacks systematically struck Hamburg’s neighborhoods with incendiaries and “were dearly of a terrorist nature” while, “during the day, the U.S.A.F. bombers attacked military and industrial targets in the dock areas and, in particular, the shipyards and submarine yards” with high-explosive bombs.

Then Walt Disney entered the picture. In *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art, and Commerce of Walt Disney*, Richard Schickel describes how Disney embraced the strategic bombing philosophy of Major Alexander de Seversky in producing a 1943 film *Victory Through Air Power*. This hour-long work of propaganda gave a tremendous boost to the argument for terror bombing. Critic James Agee wrote of the film, “I noticed, uneasily, that there were no suffering and dying enemy civilians under all those proud promises of bombs; no civilians at all, in fact.” In the closing scene the battle is between an American eagle and an octopus with its tentacles gripping a map. Agee felt he couldn’t “contentedly accept the anti-septic white lies” of the movie.

This film at first proved more popular among British policymakers than those in the United States. But that

would change. According to H.C. Potter, one of the film’s directors, Disney personally told him that Churchill had screened the film for Roosevelt at their Quebec Conference of August 1943 and thus induced Roosevelt to warm up to long-range strategic bombing.

In his public speeches, however, Roosevelt still clung to the concept of striking only military targets. Addressing Congress in September 1943 he said, “We were not bombing tenements for the sadistic pleasure of killing as the Nazis did, but blowing to bits carefully selected targets—factories, shipyards, munitions dumps.”

Colonel Robert Morgan, who piloted the first bomber to complete twenty-five missions over Europe and who later flew a B-29 over Japan, writes in *The Man Who Flew the Memphis Belle: Memoirs of a WWII Bomber Pilot*:

I will always be proud of the restraint shown in the United States Army Air Forces in those early months of the European air war—the time of the Memphis Belle. The ordnance carried by the B-17s of the mighty Eighth reflected the humanitarian hopes of our government and our strictly defined and limited mission, which was to attack only military installations, never civilian centers.

Of the later switch to civilian targets, however, Morgan writes, “Nothing and no one was safe—combatants, civilians, women, children, cities, churches, the great historical monuments” and “no physical or moral boundaries would be able to check the spread of slaughter.”

In this context, on March 6, 1944, the *New York Times* gave page one coverage to a protest by twenty-eight prominent Americans, mostly clergy, against “obliteration raids” on German cities. The protestors called upon Christians “to examine themselves concerning their participation in this carnival of death” and to acquaint themselves with “the realities of what is being done in our name in Europe.”

But the shift from pinpoint bombing of military targets to strategic, or area, bombings by the United States got another push from Churchill in 1945 when he pressed for cities in eastern Germany to be made high-priority targets. According to Geoffrey Perret in



Winged Victory: The Army Air Forces in World War II, General Carl Spaatz, “commander of the Strategic Air Force, obliged by ordering the Eighth [Air Force] to strike Berlin. Not the industries of Berlin, not the marshalling yards of Berlin, but the city center—the heart of German government and an area of high population density.” Perret writes that General Doolittle “protested that such an attack would be terrorism, without any justification on military grounds.... Spaatz, however, wasn’t prepared to discuss it. He insisted the attack go ahead.” On February 3, 1945, nearly 1,000 bombers struck Berlin’s city center, killing 3,000 Berliners and rendering 120,000 homeless.

Then, ten days later, in the evening, the British struck the German city of Dresden with 2,700 tons of bombs, half of them incendiaries. They ignited a firestorm that killed between 40,000 and 60,000 civilians in the refugee-crowded city. Two days later American B-17s, unable to find an oil refinery target, plastered Dresden’s smoldering ruins for good measure.

Kurt Vonnegut, later to pen a novel about the Dresden bombing, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, but then an American prisoner of war in the city, recalls:

Every day we walked into the city and dug into basements and shelters to get corpses out, as a sanitary measure. When we went into them, a typical shelter, an ordinary basement usually, looked like a streetcar full of people who’d simultaneously had heart failure. Just people sitting there in their chairs, all dead.

Lee Kennett in *A History of Strategic Bombing* writes that, toward the end of the war in Europe, the United States showed “an increased interest in attacks directed specifically at the German people.” R. J. Overy in *The Air War, 1939-45* writes, “The most striking moral paradox of the war years was the willingness of ostensibly liberal states to engage in the deliberate killing of hundreds of thousands of enemy civilians from the air.” Indeed, Visser t’Hooft, Secretary of the World Council of Churches, wrote at the time, “These bombardments create the impression

(See BOMBING CIVILIANS on page 18)



Dresden victim

Dynamic Young Vets in Action and Protest

by **Nadya Williams**

“VA” and “OR” are only two of dozens of innovative and healing organizations created and run by and for our former service members from the Middle East invasions and occupations.

VA—the brain child of Stephen Funk, a former Marine and the very first person in the U.S. military to refuse deployment to Iraq—stands for Veteran Artists (not the Veterans’ Administration!), and originates from the San Francisco Bay Area. Emily Yates (former Army) and Matt Edwards (ex-Marine) complete the core of organizers—all are members of IVAW (Iraq Veterans Against the War).

OR stands for Operation Recovery: A Campaign to Stop the Deployment of Traumatized Troops, a national project of IVAW. “The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are continuing through the use of exhausted troops who have been on multiple tours of duty and suffer deeply from the trauma of war,” reads the mission statement. “Thousands of soldiers are being denied their right to heal by the U.S. military so it can continue its ongoing occupations.” Both organizations are 501c(3) non-profits.

In a graphic used by Operation Recovery, are the words of recent war veteran Matt Howard: “PTSD—Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. How is this a disorder? What part of being emotionally and spiritually affected by gross violence is disorder? How about going to war and coming home with a clear conscience disorder? I think that would be far more appropriate.”

PTSD, traumatic brain injury, multiple deployments, and military sexual trauma are the main issues that the young vets are struggling with. OR estimates that approximately 20% of the current fighting force is suffering from un-treated trauma. OR advocates for specific individuals, as well as broader campaigns for change in military policy. Similar to OR, Courage to Resist, an Oakland, California based advocacy group, supports “refuseniks” and whistle blowers, like Pfc. Bradley Manning.

Veteran Artists not only use art inwardly to express themselves and heal, but they also turn outward to change America’s support for war—with dramatic guerrilla street theatre, called Operation First Casualty, an action of IVAW. “Because the first casualty of war is the truth, Operation First Casualty brings the truth home,” VA states. “In the past, veterans in uniform have highlighted the struggles of the communities targeted for military recruitment (low-income and of color) with street theatre in these neighborhoods, then moved on to local college campuses to pit the ‘veterans vs. students’ in a game of capture the flag to compare bloated military spending with domestic spending cuts for education, health care, and the arts. The action often moves to a major shopping area to end with a game resembling a chaotic roundup of “people in the streets of Iraq,” where (pre-rehearsed) civilians get “tagged,” are arrested and placed in plastic handcuffs on the ground. The day often ends in a low-income neighborhood with the young veterans dishing up free food to homeless people, bringing attention to the struggles faced by homeless vets. In a pilot project, Veteran Artists partnered with a Latino theater group in San Francisco to host a three-week storytelling workshop at the Vet’s Building in May, plus a six-week writing workshop—both free to all veterans.

“As the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq continue,” states VA’s web, “thousands of military veterans are returning from deployments and going back to civilian life, and every one of us have stories



“Ferris Wheel Over Baghdad”

Molly Fair of justseeds.org writes: *I made this print after I read a news article in 2008 about a plan to boost tourism in Iraq by building the world's largest ferris wheel dubbed the “Baghdad Eye” during a supposed lull in violence. I decided to use the image of the ferris wheel as a symbol of cycles of war, and tourism as a euphemism for invasion.*



“PTSD” by Nicolas Lampert

to tell. Whether those stories are shared over beers with family and friends, in books and blogs, in classrooms or in therapy sessions, the most important thing is that they are being told. The sharing of our personal experience is a vital tool that can be used by all veterans to help us relate to our communities and to better understand all that we've seen and done during our time in the military. For those who are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, this type of open and honest communication can also help facilitate healing and emotional and psychological growth.

Operation Recovery’s latest project is fundraising for a permanent organizing team down at Fort Hood, TX. In late April, Lt. General Donald Campbell, Jr. took command of the Army's Third Corps and Fort Hood, the largest and most deployed military installation in the United States. The May 27 IVAW web had this up-date: “Yesterday morning, six members of our Operation Recovery Team went to Fort Hood Commander, General Campbell's office to deliver a letter requesting he meet with us about the plight of traumatized troops under his command. We were turned away, then surrounded by Fort Hood security officials who became sympathetic to our cause when we identified ourselves as veterans who are dealing with PTSD. But we were ultimately escorted off base.

“In response, we held a press conference about the issue of un-treated trauma that is ravaging the Fort Hood community as well as the military at large. We then erected a guard tower across from the gates of Fort Hood as a symbolic act to let Commander Campbell know that we are keeping watch over his actions (or lack thereof) when it comes to the health and well-being of soldiers at Fort Hood. As we stood watch at the gates of Fort Hood, we handed out over 200 purple ribbons to soldiers entering the base. These ribbons symbolize our solidarity with the tens of thousands of soldiers who are suffering from un-treated trauma because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

See: www.veteranartists.org & www.ivaw.org/operation-recovery

U.S. Flag Recalled After Causing 143 Million Deaths



Flags affected by the recall range from halftime-show extravaganza models to the smallest lapel pins.

WASHINGTON—Citing a series of fatal malfunctions dating back to 1777, flag manufacturer Annin & Company announced Monday that it would be recalling all makes and models of its popular American flag from both foreign and domestic markets.

Representatives from the nation's leading flag producer claimed that as many as 143 million deaths in the past two centuries can be attributed directly to the faulty U.S. models, which have been utilized extensively since the 18th century in sectors as diverse as government, the military, and public education.

“It has come to our attention that, due to the inherent risks and hazards it poses, the American flag is simply unfit for general use,” said Annin & Company president Ronald Burman, who confirmed that the number of flag-related deaths had noticeably spiked since 2003. “I would like to strongly urge all U.S. citizens: If you have an American flag hanging in your home or place of business, please discontinue using it immediately.”

Added Burman, “The last thing we would want is for more innocent men and women around the world to die because of our product.”

Millions of U.S. flag-related injuries and fatalities have been reported over a 230-year period in locations as far flung as Europe; Cuba; Korea; Gettysburg, PA;

the Philippines; and Iraq. In addition, the company found that U.S. flag exports to Viet Nam during the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths*, a clear sign that there was something seriously wrong with its product.

Despite fears about the flag's safety—especially when improperly used or manipulated in ways not originally intended—sales continued unabated over the years, potentially putting billions of unsuspecting people in danger.

“At first, we wanted one of our flags in every home in America,” Burman said. “Unfortunately, the practical applications of this product are far outnumbered by the risks it presents. Millions have died needlessly, and when you ask people why, they point to the flag.”

Added Burman, “Frankly, we should have pulled it off the market decades ago.”

Studies conducted by the Annin & Company research and development department revealed that faulty U.S. flags have caused more than just injuries and deaths. During the mid-1950s, the flags were found to have the bizarre side effect of causing fear, paranoia, and hysterical behavior among millions of Americans. This was dismissed as an isolated event until September 2001, when similar symptoms reemerged on a massive scale.

As hazardous as the flags may be on their own, Annin & Company officials claimed the products become even more dangerous when used in conjunction with other common household items.

“When combined with alcohol, excessive patriotism, grief, or well-intentioned but ultimately misguided ideals, U.S. flags transform into ticking time bombs, just waiting to go off,” Burman said.

Manufacturers are addressing the flag's unsafe and potentially lethal alignment of stars and stripes by designing a revised model that they hope will cut down on deaths in the United States and overseas, where experts say the flag is nearly 1,000 times as deadly.

In the meantime, Annin & Company is advising all Americans to either ship their flags back to the manufacturer or, if no time permits, dispose of them in an efficient manner.

“I understand that people might be reluctant to stop using a product they have found to be reliable over the years,” Burman told reporters. “But I can't in good conscience allow them to use something I know to be dangerous. We'll try to make adjustments soon and come up with something that benefits everybody rather than hurting them.”

Added Burman, “In the interim, I would recommend that all Americans switch to the Canadian flag, which seems to be working just fine.”

This article was reprinted with permission from the Onion—America's Finest News Source www.theonion.com where it appeared on April 13, 2011.

* military deaths (all sides) alone exceeded 1 million; civilian deaths were several millions more. —Ed.



Josh MacPhee of justseeds.org writes: This woman stands out on the street corner in Troy, NY every weekend holding a sign with the current number of dead U.S. soldiers in Iraq. I took the liberty of changing her sign to ask what seems to me to be the question her presence raises. This print is inspired by all the people that have been consistent and persistent in their opposition to the war.



Mark Runge is an artist, teacher, contributing editor to the WCT, and a veteran of the first war against Iraq. His artworks and writings can be found at mark4art.com. Here's how he describes the piece above: *This piece is one of the more successful pieces that I have done which incorporated gunpowder and water color. The piece, Menis, is an attempt to show the rage that I sometimes feel. I cannot always feel it coming on, and I do not always deal with it well when it comes; but I am learning to temper that rage and turn it into something positive and constructive. This drawing is done with gunpowder and watercolor paint on paper.*



Unfortunate casualties of Old Glory's near-continuous 230-year use.

The Targeted Assassination of Osama Bin Laden

by Marjorie Cohn

When he announced that Osama bin Laden had been killed by a Navy Seal team in Pakistan, President Barack Obama said, "Justice has been done." Mr. Obama misused the word, "justice" when he made that statement. He should have said, "Retaliation has been accomplished." A former professor of constitutional law should know the difference between those two concepts. The word "justice" implies an act of applying or upholding the law.



Photo of Osama bin Laden by Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir, the last journalist to speak with bin Laden, in December 2001

Targeted assassinations violate well-established principles of international law. Also called political assassinations, they are extrajudicial executions. These are unlawful and deliberate killings carried out by order of, or with the acquiescence of, a government,

outside any judicial framework.

Extrajudicial executions are unlawful, even in armed conflict. In a 1998 report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions noted that "extrajudicial executions can never be justified under any circumstances, not even in time of war." The U.N. General Assembly and Human Rights Commission, as well as Amnesty International, have all condemned extrajudicial executions.

In spite of its illegality, the Obama administration frequently uses targeted assassinations to accomplish its goals. Five days after executing Osama bin Laden, Mr. Obama tried to bring "justice" to U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, who has not been charged with any crime in the United States. The unmanned drone attack in Yemen missed al-Awlaki and killed two people "believed to be al Qaeda militants," according to a CBS/AP bulletin.

Two days before the Yemen attack, U.S. drones killed 15 people in Pakistan and wounded four. Since the March 17 drone attack that killed 44 people, also in Pakistan, there have been four drone strikes. In 2010, American drones carried out 111 strikes. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan says that 957 civilians were killed in 2010.

The United States disavowed the use of extrajudicial killings under President Gerald Ford. After the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence disclosed in 1975 that the CIA had been involved in several murders or attempted murders of foreign leaders, President Ford issued an executive order banning assassinations. Every succeeding president until George W. Bush renewed that order. However, the Clinton administration targeted Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, but narrowly missed him.

In July 2001, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel denounced Israel's policy of targeted killings, or "preemptive operations." He said "the United States government is very clearly on the record as against targeted assassinations. They are extrajudicial killings, and we do not support that."



President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, along with members of the national security team, receive an update on Operation Neptune's Spear, a mission against Osama bin Laden, in one of the conference rooms of the Situation Room of the White House, May 1, 2011.

Yet after September 11, 2001, former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer invited the killing of Saddam Hussein: "The cost of one bullet, if the Iraqi people take it on themselves, is substantially less" than the cost of war. Shortly thereafter, Bush issued a secret directive, which authorized the CIA to target suspected terrorists for assassination when it would be impractical to capture them and when large-scale civilian casualties could be avoided.



Ari Fleischer:
"The cost of one bullet..."

In November 2002, Bush reportedly authorized the CIA to assassinate a suspected Al Qaeda leader in Yemen. He and five traveling companions were killed in the hit, which Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz described as a "very successful tactical operation."

After the Holocaust, Winston Churchill wanted to execute the Nazi leaders without trials. But the U.S. government opposed the extrajudicial executions of Nazi officials who had committed genocide against millions of people. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, who served as chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, told President Harry Truman: "We could execute or otherwise punish [the Nazi leaders] without a hearing. But indiscriminating executions or punishments without definite findings of guilt, fairly arrived at, would ...not set easily on the American conscience or be remembered by children with pride."

Osama bin Laden and the "suspected militants" targeted in drone attacks should have been arrested and tried in U.S. courts or an international tribunal. Obama cannot serve as judge, jury, and executioner. These assassinations are not only illegal; they create a dangerous precedent, which could be used to justify the targeted killings of U.S. leaders.

Marjorie Cohn is a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and past president of the National Lawyers Guild. She is deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Her latest book, *The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration and Abuse*, was published earlier this year by NYU Press. See www.marjoriecohn.com.

Mass action in DC planned for October 6 on the 10th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan. Organizers are asking all who seek peace, economic justice, human rights, and a healthy environment to join together in nonviolent resistance. Learn more and pledge allegiance to the cause at

October2011.org

Suppose bin Laden could have testified at his trial...

We've been led to believe* that Osama bin Laden was the "mastermind" of the attacks of September 11, 2001. Here's what he had to say in an interview published in the *Daily Ummat* of Karachi, Pakistan on September 28, 2001:



I have already said that I am not involved in the September 11 attacks in the United States. As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. I had no knowledge of these attacks, nor do I consider the killing of innocent women, children and other human beings as an appreciable act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children and other people. Such a practice is forbidden even in the course of battle. It is the United States which is perpetrating every sort of maltreatment on women, children and common people of other faiths, particularly the followers of Islam....Whoever committed the act of 11 September are not the friends of the American people. I have already said that we are against the American system, not against its people, whereas in these attacks, the common American people have been killed.

[* We've also been led to believe that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, that he was linked to al Qaeda, that Guantánamo would close, and that U.S. troops would withdraw from Iraq.]

Nuremberg Prosecutor on the Crime of September 11, 2001 and Osama bin Laden



Benjamin B. Ferencz at Nuremberg, and more recently.

Benjamin B. Ferencz was a prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, particularly Chief Prosecutor of Einsatzgruppen (22 defendants charged with murdering over a million people, called by the Associated Press the biggest murder trial in history). A graduate of Harvard Law School, he served in the Army under General Patton in every campaign in Europe and helped liberate Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Dachau. Ben Ferencz has spent much of his life advocating for a strong international criminal court and for a clear definition of the crime of international aggression (the United States has vigorously opposed both).

In September 2001 following the World Trade Center attack, he wrote:

Hijacking passenger planes and deliberately and intentionally smashing them into large buildings, thereby causing the death of thousands of innocent civilians is clearly a crime against humanity. With origins going back to antiquity, the judicial punishment of such crimes at the Nuremberg trials after the Second World War was affirmed by the United Nations and in many courts since that time. The United States played a leading role in establishing that as a universally binding legal principle.

Any person, without regard to nationality or the capacity in which he acted, is deemed to have committed the crime if he was a principle or accessory, took a consenting part therein or was connected with any organization or group connected with the commission of the crime. Under common principle of criminal law, anyone who aids or abets a crime, before or after its commission, thereby becomes an accessory to the crime and is liable to punishment.

The United States should draw up an indictment against Osama Bin Laden and all of the terrorist groups known to the FBI, alleging the commission of crimes against humanity, details of which should be specified....

In the unfortunate absence of any permanent international criminal court, the Security Council, following its own precedents, can quickly set up an ad hoc international criminal tribunal to try the accused—as was done with U.S. support—for the crimes against humanity committed in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The trials should be absolutely fair. I would have no objection to fair trials in the U.S., but the world would doubt that it would be possible under the prevailing circumstances. If found guilty, the defendants could be incarcerated in the U.S.—and we could throw away the key!

I have experienced the horrors of war and I cannot bear to see the destruction and the pained eyes of those digging in the ruins or the helpless relatives refusing to accept what they know is now inevitable. I have flashbacks of riding over the ruins of St. Lo in Normandy where the sky was black with American bombers and the earth rocked as a French city was reduced to rubble. I smell the smoke of Wurzburg burning when we dropped incendiary bombs that burned every house to the ground, leaving only ghostly walls standing. I recall the emaciated corpses at Buchenwald and Mauthausen and a host of other charnel houses. And I remember Berlin when the Russians got through with it. I see my remorseless Nuremberg defendants who killed over a million people, including the murder of 33,771 innocent men, women, and children at Babi Yar on September 29 and 30, 1941—the Jewish High Holy Days. All this may help explain the trauma that drives me to try to prevent war.

We must try to understand the causes of the violence and try to diminish the hatreds that encourage people to kill or be killed for their particular cause. This requires new thinking, a willingness to compromise, compassion and tolerance, a greater respect for the goals set down in the UN Charter and infinite patience. I am now approaching 82 and I have not given up hope.

Following the killing of Osama bin Laden in May, he wrote:

Jubilation over the death of the most hunted mass murderer is understandable, but was it really justifiable self-defense, or was it premeditated illegal assassination? The Nuremberg trials earned worldwide respect by giving Hitler's worst henchmen a fair trial so that truth would be revealed and justice under law would prevail. Secret nonjudicial decisions based on political or military considerations undermine democracy. The public is entitled to know the complete truth.

My Reaction to Osama bin Laden's Death

by Noam Chomsky

It's increasingly clear that the operation was a planned assassination, multiply violating elementary norms of international law. There appears to have been no attempt to apprehend the unarmed victim, as presumably could have been done by 80 commandos facing virtually no opposition—except, they claim, from his wife, who lunged towards them. In societies that profess some respect for law, suspects are apprehended and brought to fair trial. I stress “suspects.”

In April 2002, the head of the FBI, Robert Mueller, informed the press that after the most intensive investigation in history, the FBI could say no more than that it “believed” that the plot was hatched in Afghanistan, though implemented in the UAE and Germany. What they only believed in April 2002, they obviously didn't know 8 months earlier, when Washington dismissed tentative offers by the Taliban (how serious, we do not know, because they were instantly dismissed) to extradite bin Laden if they were presented with evidence—which, as we soon learned, Washington didn't have. Thus Obama was simply lying when he said, in his White House statement, that “we quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by al Qaeda.”

Nothing serious has been provided since. There is much talk of bin Laden's “confession,” but that is rather like my confession that I won the Boston Marathon. He boasted of what he regarded as a great achievement.

There is also much media discussion of Washington's anger that Pakistan didn't turn over bin Laden, though surely elements of the military and security forces were aware of his presence in Abbottabad. Less is said about Pakistani anger that the U.S. invaded their territory to carry out a political assassination. Anti-American fervor is already very high in Pakistan, and these events are likely to exacerbate it. The decision to dump the body at sea is already, predictably, provoking both anger and skepticism in much of the Muslim world.

We might ask ourselves how we would be reacting if Iraqi commandos landed at George W. Bush's compound, assassinated him, and dumped his body in the Atlantic. Uncontroversially, his crimes vastly exceed bin Laden's, and he is not a “suspect” but uncontroversially the “decider” who gave the orders to commit the “supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole” (quoting the Nuremberg Tribunal) for which Nazi criminals were hanged: the hundreds of thousands of deaths [in Iraq], millions of refugees, destruction of much of the country, the bitter sectarian conflict that has now spread to the rest of the region.

There's more to say about [Cuban airline bomber Orlando] Bosch, who just died peacefully in Florida, including reference to the “Bush doctrine” that societies that harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves and should be treated accordingly. No one seemed to notice that Bush was calling for invasion and destruction of the U.S. and murder of its criminal president.

Same with the name, Operation Geronimo. The imperial mentality is so profound, throughout western society, that no one can perceive that they are glorifying bin Laden by identifying him with courageous resistance against genocidal invaders. It's like naming our murder weapons after victims of our crimes: Apache, Tomahawk... It's as if the Luftwaffe were to call its fighter planes “Jew” and “Gypsy.”

There is much more to say, but even the most obvious and elementary facts should provide us with a good deal to think about.

Noam Chomsky is Institute Professor (retired) at MIT. He is the author of many books and articles on international affairs and social-political issues. This article was reprinted with Mr. Chomsky's permission.

To stop unrestrained violence, let us never forget that law is always better than war.

—Benjamin Ferencz, August 2001

HONDURAS – Democracy Sneaking in the Back Door of U.S. Gunboat Diplomacy

U.S. domination can take covert forms—less obvious than full-out interventions and occupations, but just as destructive to democracy.

by Nadya Williams

Honduras' President Manuel Zelaya, ousted in June of 2009 by a coup, was "allowed" to return to his country—but not to power—on May 28th. Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted in a February 2004 coup, was "allowed" to return to his country—but not to power—in February of this year, after 7 years in involuntary exile in South Africa.

A new game plan to the historic Yankee domination of all countries south of our border seems to be emerging—perhaps (or at least one hopes) the old scenarios of American military invasions, assassinations, creating and arming death squads, unbridled extraction of resources, and blatant support for ruthless dictators is a thing of the past. Now a more sophisticated game plan seems to be in play. This can be credited to the many decades of struggle and sacrifice for democracy and sovereignty by the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, and a few (albeit feeble) attempts by some in Washington to curtail the activities and obsessions of U.S. Latin Americanist Cold Warriors and their far-right allies in the region—or at the very least, window dress intervention in more attractive garb.

A comprehensive list of countries the United States has invaded or destabilized economically and politically would require many pages. William Blum's thorough study *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* identifies 55 different operations which helped overthrow foreign governments, and there have been more since that book's publication in 2000.

Historic domination aside, it's important to ask why Washington seems obsessed with containing any legitimate pro-democracy movement in Honduras, the hemisphere's second poorest country (after Haiti). Little Honduras, with 8 million people, is no longer the Reagan-era U.S. base from which to attack Sandinista Nicaragua and contain the popular rebellions in El Salvador and Guatemala. However, it is still cursed with its proximity to these potentially volatile and impoverished countries, thus it still occupies a strategic position in Central America.

Our premier alternative news program, "Democracy Now," had extensive coverage of the Honduran coup and Zelaya's return—to the point where newscaster Amy Goodman accompanied the (now former) president on his triumphal flight to the capital, Tegucigalpa.

Apparently a major strike against the deposed leader in the eyes of the right wing in the U.S. State Department and the Southern Command was his good relations with the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chavez, which included favorable terms on petroleum trade. A further negative against the Zelaya administration included Honduras' membership in the new organization of ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas)—which in essence constitutes a declaration of independence and sovereignty against foreign domination. Add to this the Zelaya government's desire to convert the airport of the U.S. military base of Palmerola to civilian use to replace the dangerous and accident-prone airport in Tegucigalpa. In addition, like the efforts toward poverty alleviation and social equality in other ALBA countries, Zelaya's more egalitarian administration was a de facto threat to the dominance of Honduras' wealthy elite.

These and other acts of sovereignty, apparently

A comprehensive list of countries the United States has invaded or destabilized economically and politically would require many pages.

could not be tolerated, and led factions of the Honduran military, with the collusion of their Supreme Court and National Congress, to forcibly oust him—all ostensibly over a dispute involving changes to the national constitution. The United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the European Union were quick to condemn the removal of Zelaya as a military coup d'état. The OAS suspended Honduras' membership the next day.

But Washington's response was more equivocal. Initially, the United States condemned the ouster and continued to recognize the democratically-elected Zelaya as the only constitutional president of Honduras. Although U.S. officials characterized the events as a "coup," suspended joint military operations and all non-emergency, non-immigrant visas, and cut off certain non-humanitarian aid to Honduras, they held back from formally designating Zelaya's ouster a "military coup," which would require Washington to cut off almost all aid to Honduras. Eighty-seven members of the U.S. Congress disagreed and recently sent a letter to the State Department calling for a complete halt to all U.S. military aid, citing ever-increasing state violence against the civilian population protesting the new regime of President Pepe Lobos, which was installed in dubious elections in November, 2009.

Since 2009, the coup regime subjected the Honduran resistance to assassinations, torture, death threats, and constant repression. Overall economic policies have generated serious confrontations between the U.S.-financed Honduran



Honduras police: Your tax dollars at work —against striking teachers.
(used with permission from www.Presente-honduras.org)

security forces and the general population. In the last few months alone, mass demonstrations against the privatization of the education system were met with massive repression that resulted in the death of one school teacher, the arbitrary arrests of dozens more, and the firing of hundreds of teachers who participated.

A recent AP article by Laura González and Arturo J. Viscarra lays out the real reason why Zelaya's return was delayed, and why he is not being restored to power. It describes a conference titled "Honduras is Open for Business," held in the city of San Pedro Sula on May 4-6. According to its official site, this gathering "aims at re-launching Honduras as the most attractive investment destination in Latin America." The new President Lobos invited over 1,000 corporations to bid on at least 147 projects with an estimated value of \$14.6 billion—a figure only slightly less than the Gross Domestic Product of Honduras for 2010 (\$16.3 billion).

The Honduran people are now faced with the threat of privatization on a grand scale. According to the official "Honduras is Open for Business" agenda, project proposals made publicly available include: agribusiness (GMO corn, genetically-bred swine, etc.), "renewable" energy, tourism, infrastructure, forestry, textiles, transportation, and business services—as well as the privatization of the state telephone company (to be headed by coup leader General Romeo Vasquez Velasquez), plus the construction of five hydroelectric dams. If implemented, many of these projects would drain yet more wealth upward to national and global elites, further deepen economic disparities, displace large numbers of rural farmers (via dam construction), and introduce products (GMOs, etc.) that would cause harm to the country's agriculture.

U.S. domination can take many covert forms, less obvious than full-out intervention and occupation, but just as destructive to democracy and prosperity for the majority populace. The U.S. government and multinational corporations are eager to treat Honduras as an investment opportunity. Such opportunistic exploitation speaks volumes about the real priorities of U.S. foreign policy. The people of Honduras deserve better, to say the least.

See also: www.DemocracyNow.org; Honduras Accompaniment Project—Friendship Office of the Americas: www.friendshipamericas.org/honduras; Latin America Solidarity Coalition: www.lasolidarity.org & Alliance for Global Justice: www.afgj.org



May Day 2011 protest in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The T-shirt reads "Freedom for Life."
(Edgard Garrido/Reuters with permission from Agencia EFE)

August 10: Agent Orange Victims' Day

The 50th anniversary of the worst chemical war crime in the history of the world

by Nadya Williams

The Viet Nameese calculate that the deadly defoliant Agent Orange was first unleashed on their peoples and ecosystem on August 10, 1961. Therefore, August 10 is commemorated nationally and globally each year as Agent Orange Victims' Day, and this year will mark the 50th anniversary of the worst chemical war crime in the history of the world. An estimated 25% of South Viet Nam was poisoned with AO that was contaminated with the deadliest chemical known to science—dioxin.

One result is that DNA has become permanently damaged in millions of people, causing births today of sick and deformed children who are the grandchildren of those exposed. The chemical can be cleaned up (at great expense) from the soil of "hot spots," but it can never be removed from the bodies of those unlucky enough to have been exposed, long ago—or still today.

Even those who were never sprayed in the 10 years of "Operation Ranch Hand" (1961 to 1971) are being harmed by living on or near hot spots and unknowingly eating contaminated fish and other food animals.

An unknown number—easily hundreds of thousands—of Viet Nameese have died in the last half century from Agent Orange. Tens of thousands of U.S. South Korean, and other veterans have died as well. It is known that 3 to 4 million Viet Nameese are afflicted today with cancers, severe birth defects, mental retardation, and a host of other often fatal illnesses.

The Fall, 2011 issue of the War Crimes Times will have an in-depth feature article on the subject. See also The Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign www.vn-agentorange.org for more information.

SPRING 2012 TRIP TO VIET NAM

The only overseas chapter of Veterans For Peace, the Hoa Binh (Peace) Chapter 160 in Viet Nam, is inviting up to ten veterans to come as a group in the spring of 2012.

Arriving in Ha Noi, the group will be met by chapter president Suel Jones who, along with Chuck Searcy, will lead the group. Suel works with victims of Agent Orange (AO) and has lived in VN for half of every year since 1998; Chuck works with Project RENEW, a non-profit mine action organization clearing unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Quang Tri Province, and has lived full time in VN since 1995. "The group would be positively received by the Viet Nameese & the media," they write, "particularly during the 37th anniversary of the April 30, 1975 end of the war." In addition to enjoying the beauty of the country, participants will learn more about AO and UXOs and many other issues.

Trip details and costs at <http://vfp-vn.ning.com/forum/topics/spring-2012-trip-to-viet-nam>. The U.S. contact is Nadya Williams (nadyanomad@gmail.com or 415-362-0162) of San Francisco VFP Chapter 69 and member of the national board of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign. Project RENEW's website is: www.landmines.org.vn.



Photos: U.S. military planes cropdusting with Agent Orange in Viet Nam during Operation Ranch Hand which lasted from 1961 to 1971 (USAF); Professor Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, at Tu Du Obstetrics and Gynecology Hospital with a group of handicapped children, most of them victims of Agent Orange (Alexis Duclos, December 2004)



Till We Bring Them Home Again

There are voices newly rising,
We can hear them sound as one.
They're our brothers, they're our sisters,
They're our children, dads, and moms.

We have listened to their stories,
We have heard them speak their truth.
We have seen the young grown aged,
Spied the old man in the youth.

*Will you walk along beside me,
Heart to heart and hand in hand?
We're reclaiming hope and justice,
And for peace we make our stand.*

*We're the faith that's never broken,
We're the love that has no end.
We are marching steady onward
Till we bring them home again.*

For our finest, for the futures
Sacrificed in fire and blood,
By the rage that makes us righteous,
By the grace that makes us good,

We're the Cadre of the Kindred:
Country, family, and friends,
As the dark becomes the dawning
And we bring them home again.

*Will you walk along beside me,
Heart to heart and hand in hand?
We're reclaiming hope and justice,
And for peace we make our stand.*

*We're the faith that's never broken,
We're the love that has no end.
We are marching steady onward
Till we bring them home again.*

For SSgt. Jonathan Segal, USMC, for he is legion.

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Chris Hondros

Tragically, the American photojournalist Chris Hondros, who took the iconic picture of 5-year-old Samar Hassan that was on the back page of our Winter 2011 issue, was killed on April 20th in Misurata, Libya. Hondros, 41, died along with *Restrepo* director Tim Hetherington in a mortar attack. He covered most of the world's major conflicts since the late 1990s, including wars in Kosovo, Angola, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Iraq. Nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 2004, he was lauded for his commitment to reporting the plight of others and putting his life on the line.

His most famous photo was taken in Iraq in 2005 of little Samar screaming minutes after both her parents were shot dead by American troops in their car, while driving at night, because they failed to stop at a checkpoint. Of her five siblings in the back seat, Samar's young brother, Racan, was wounded with a bullet piercing his spine, paralyzing him from the waist down. Five months of rehabilitation in a Boston hospital elicited a photo series and many articles about the boy. One web of Hondros' photos of the incident opines: "After all, this is not only the story about Racan, but also, it is the story about American mass media desperately seeking for a positive take on the war in Iraq." Racan was returned to Iraq to live with his older sister's family, but was killed on June 16th 2008 by a bomb placed by insurgents next to his new home.

—Nadya Williams

See: DemocracyNow.org—with interviews of Chris Hondros' colleagues; also: turnstilenews.com for a 2007 interview with Hondros.

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Bombing Civilians

(Continued from page 11)

that the whole world has gone totalitarian.”

Meanwhile, in the Pacific theater of operations, Major General Curtis LeMay took over the U.S. XXI Bomber Command in January 1945 and decided the high-altitude precision daylight bombing of Japanese military targets had achieved only limited success. So he changed tactics. On February 25, his bombers showered incendiaries on one square mile of Tokyo, destroying some 28,000 buildings. These incendiaries were a mixture of magnesium and jellied gasoline that clung to the surface of whatever they struck—human beings included—and burned slowly at a high temperature. According to Colonel Robert Morgan, who flew a B-29 over Tokyo:

We were bombing with the very latest in the grim technology of death by fire—the incendiary M-69 and napalm-packed M-17. Tens of thousands of these projectiles were now falling on the center of Tokyo, turning it into a hell on earth....As the fires spread and conjoined, the stampeding crowds grew. They choked the narrow streets, fleeing from one incinerated block only to collide with another throng streaming in the opposite direction. Great tongues of fire reached out to roast them en masse, like the breath of massive dragons. As the fires surged into vacuums created by the eaten-up oxygen, wind velocity increased, and scrambling human herds were overtaken by hundred-mile-an-hour firewinds. In their desperation, thousands of men, women, and children flocked towards the rivers and canals that cut through Tokyo, but these only yielded other forms of hideous deaths. Jumpers drowned, were asphyxiated, or were crushed to death by succeeding waves of jumpers. Soon the steel girders of bridges spanning the waters grew white-hot, forcing refugees to jump into water that was itself beginning to boil.

The *New York Times* reported that, between November 24, 1944, and August 15, 1945, American B-29 bombers flew more than 28,500 sorties in 315 missions on which about 159,000 tons of bombs and mines were dropped on sixty-four Japanese cities. Referring to the bombing of Tokyo on March 9, reporter W. H. Lawrence wrote, “It marked the first all-out effort to burn down a great city and destroy its people.” In this Tokyo raid, 334 B-29’s leveled 16 square miles of the city containing



A U.S. Air Force Douglas A-1E Skyraider drops a white phosphorus bomb in South Vietnam in 1966 (U.S. Air Force photo).

267,000 structures, killing 83,000 people, injuring 41,000 more, and prompting Japanese radio to condemn the United States for butchering civilians.

Thomas Coffey in his biography *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay* writes that the general began his incendiary bombing campaign believing the destruction of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kobe would speed the end of the conflict. LeMay’s approach was so effective, however, that he quickly ran out of cities to incinerate. By June 1945, nearly all the major cities of Japan had been reduced to rubble.

But was this a sensible strategy, either for the war in Europe or Asia? Robert Batchelder, in *The Irreversible Decision, 1939-50*, reports that, after the end of the war, strategic bombing surveys by the Department of Defense revealed that the military value of bombing civilian populations was minimal or even negative. Regarding Germany, *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey: Summary Report (European War)* of September 30, 1945, concluded:

The mental reaction of the German people to air attack is significant. Under ruthless Nazi control they showed surprising resistance to the terror and hardships of repeated air attack, to the destruction of their homes and belongings, and to the conditions under which they were reduced to live. Their morale, their belief in ultimate victory or satisfactory compromise, and their confidence in their leaders declined, but they continued to work efficiently as long as the physical means of production remained.

For all the bombs dropped on German cities, the military and the people remained resourceful enough to minimize the damage to their infrastructure and hold out for years. This was in part because, as bombing became a weapon

of terror against civilians, it strengthened the German will to resist. This is logical. In the face of an attacker that proves itself inhumane, surrender isn’t an option; only resistance makes sense. The same held true for Japan. And the lesson was learned again in the Viet Nam War. That tiny country received more bombs than Europe, yet it was able to advance

its war effort until the United States withdrew.

The starkest example of the terror bombing of civilians is, of course, the use of atomic weapons against two cities in Japan. This story takes us back before the war.

Drafted by atomic physicist Leo Szilard, Albert Einstein’s famous letter of August 2, 1939, alerted President Roosevelt to the concept and power of atomic weapons, declaring: “A single bomb of this type carried by boat and exploded in port might very well destroy the whole port together with some surrounding territory.” Because of the letter’s warning that the Germans might develop such a weapon, Roosevelt moved forward on an American program.

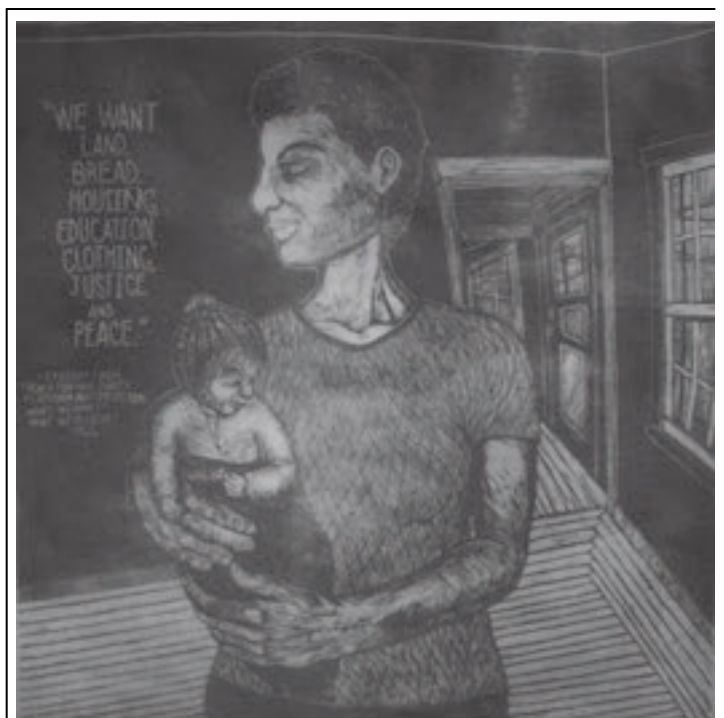
“Roosevelt consistently supported the manufacture and use of the atomic bomb atomic bomb or A-bomb, weapon deriving its explosive force from the release of atomic energy through the fission (splitting) of heavy nuclei. The first atomic bomb was produced at the Los Alamos, New Mexico, laboratory and successfully tested on July 16, 1945. This was the culmination of a large U.S. army program that was part of the Manhattan Project, led by Dr. Robert Oppenheimer.” writes Ted Morgan in *FDR: A Biography*. David McCullough states in *Truman* that the atomic bomb was Roosevelt’s project, “his decision, his venture.” Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote: “At no time, from 1941 to 1945, did I ever hear it suggested by the President, or by any other responsible member of

government, that atomic energy should not be used in the war.” And Cordell Hull, who didn’t hesitate to condemn Japanese atrocities, praised Roosevelt “for making the tremendous decision to go the length of spending \$2 billion in developing the atomic bomb.”

By June 1942 a British-American partnership was forged to develop the weapon, with the Manhattan Project established in August under command of Brigadier General Leslie Groves, who previously directed construction of the Pentagon. Then, on December 2, 1942, Szilard’s team at the University of Chicago produced the first self-sustained nuclear chain reaction. Two years later, “At a meeting with Stimson on December 30, 1944, FDR approved the production and testing of the bombs, and the training of the crews of the 509th Composite [bomber] Group,” Morgan writes.

After the American firebombing raids in 1945, however, Szilard became disillusioned. In an interview with *U.S. News & World Report* on August 15, 1960, he said, “Prior to the war, I had the illusion that up to a point the American government was different” from other countries that “are guided by considerations of expediency rather than by moral considerations.... Then, during the war, without any explanation, we began to use incendiary bombs against the cities of Japan. This was disturbing to me and it was disturbing many of my [scientific] friends.” So in June 1945, Szilard and other scientists published *Second Thoughts About Atomic Power: Report of the Committee on Social and Political Implications* in which the Allies were urged not to use the weapon, not only for the horror it would produce but because it would launch a nuclear arms race.

At the Potsdam conference in July 1945, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe Dwight D. Eisenhower



We Want Peace by Meredith Stern/justseeds.org

expressed the hope that the United States wouldn't initiate the use of something as "horrible and destructive as this weapon was described to be," writes David Eisenhower. Churchill, however, told a different story. "The decision to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never an issue. There was unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement around our table; nor did I ever hear the slightest suggestion that we should do otherwise." Indeed, McCullough states that Roosevelt had left behind no policy in writing concerning the atomic bomb other than a note to Churchill stating, "It might perhaps, after mature consideration, be used against the Japanese, who should be warned that this bombardment will be repeated until they surrender."

Yet there were alternative strategies to defeating Japan other than by obliteration from the skies. By early 1945, virtually all of Japan's Imperial Navy and merchant fleet had been sunk and the U.S. Navy had a stranglehold on an island nation that relied on imports to survive. In time, this might have forced surrender. Again, the Soviet Union had previously agreed to hurl its military might against Japanese troops in Manchuria in early August, and did—an action that further undermined Japan's will to resist.

Japan knew from pitched battles in an undeclared war in Mongolia in the late 1930s that its army was no match for the Red Army's superior tanks and artillery. Finally, in the weeks before the nuclear blasts, the Japanese urgently attempted to convince Moscow to broker peace with the United States, but Moscow stalled them. The United States—which had broken the Japanese secret code—knew of this but was determined to use its atomic weapons anyway.

"The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me," Truman said, according to McCullough. He ordered Stimson to use it "so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children"—a statement McCullough says Truman "knew to be only partly true."

So on August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb obliterated five square miles of Hiroshima and claimed 70,000 lives, including a score of American prisoners of war held captive there. Within two weeks about 90,000 were dead and the final count has been put as high as 200,000. On August 9, an atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki killed 74,800 more people, according to Japanese officials. Russia declared war on Japan the same day and six days later Japan surrendered.

The Vatican condemned the new weapon as a "catastrophic conclusion to the war's apocalyptic surprises" notes Gordon Thomas and Max Witts in their

history, *Enola Gay*, named for the plane that dropped the Hiroshima bomb. And, according to Ronald E. Powaski in *March to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1939 to the Present*, Eisenhower told Stimson, "It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."

By contrast, Doolittle wrote that using the two atomic bombs on Japan was the right thing to do. "In my opinion, it was, for one very simple reason: it saved lives. A land invasion of Japan would have cost both sides hundreds of thousands of casualties." Like many others, Doolittle apparently gave no thought to whether innocent civilians should be sacrificed to spare military personnel. Was it ethical to incinerate Japanese children to spare American fighting men the risk of battle?

LeMay was even more bold, defending the nuclear detonations as essentially no different from his previous fire bombings: "We scorched and boiled and baked to death more people in Tokyo on that night of March 9-10 than went up in vapor at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined." He added, "But to worry about the morality of what we were doing—Nuts.... I can recognize no more depravity in dropping a nuclear weapon than in having a V-2 rocket equipped with an orthodox warhead, and shooting it vaguely in the general direction of London, as the Germans did. No difference whatsoever." Thus LeMay unwittingly confirmed that the United States had stooped to the level of the Nazis.

In assessing culpability for the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians by aerial bombardment, the fascist governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan must be held to account. But so, too, must Great Britain and the United States. Their leaders wouldn't have lied to their publics if their consciences had been clear.

By the end of the war, more than seven million Germans and eight million Japanese had been bombed out of their homes, and estimates of the German and Japanese dead have been put as high as one million in each country. Of these victims, perhaps 20 percent were children.

Before the outbreak of World War II, the United States condemned the terror bombing of Spanish civilians by Hitler. By 1945 it was inflicting the same horror on the Axis. One of these two contradictory positions had to be wrong. In fact, the United States slid from the moral high ground at the outbreak of World War II to nuclear ground zero by the end of it. Thus, while Americans rightly deplore the failure of the Japanese to apologize to China for its war crimes or to cite them in the historical record taught to Japanese schoolchildren, Americans cannot gloss over their country's own record

of terror bombing in World War II and beyond.

Indeed, the failure of Americans in general to recognize this fault has impaired their moral vision so that reckless interventions abroad invariably are colored to appear noble. This is why Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon could lay waste to Viet Nam, and George W. Bush could launch a war of aggression against Iraq on the pretext of destroying nuclear weapons while at the same time warning other

nations not to develop them at their peril. Only when the United States re-discovers its moral compass will it once again be able to regain the moral high ground in international affairs.

Sherwood Ross formerly reported for the Chicago Daily News and was a columnist at two major wire services. He now runs the Anti-War News Service. To reach him for comment or to contribute to his operation, write sherwoodr1@yahoo.com.

"the relentless hum of a giant indestructible insect"

Some artists use paint; others use words. David Ignatius depicts a drone strike in this excerpt from his new novel which centers on revenge for a predator missile attack in South Waziristan that kills a doctor's family. The scene: Dr. Omar al-Wazir is back home in South Waziristan for holidays and for a walk above his home with his brother, Karimullah.



They're almost home. Karimullah is running ahead now to tell their mother that they're back so she can prepare the meal. The light is dying in the afternoon. The mountains are pink where the sun hits the ridges and then the shadows deep purple and cherry black. The sky is a cold dark blue. The moon is up, but the stars are not yet visible.

Omar looks up by reflex. "The sky is empty," he thinks. But then a ray of the disappearing sun catches something in the sky, a ping of light. He shouts to his younger brother, but he's too far ahead to hear now. The guests are already gathering. Their trucks are parked in front of the walled compound. "It is impossible," Omar thinks. "These demons will not harm my family. I've tried to help them, even my brothers and the other fighters. What have they done to America?"

Omar begins to run. He's been thinking about what he will say tonight to his father and his brothers, but now, his subtle mind is no more capable of forming a thought than that of an animal on the run. He can hear the sound. It is the faint throb of an engine and he wants to think it's coming from town down the road a few miles away, but it is sharper and more persistent. He looks up again and he knows with the instinctual certainty of the hunted that the sound is coming from the sky 10,000 feet above.

He cries out to his brother as he runs toward the walls that contained his life when he was a boy and that now shelters his mother and sisters and the young children. Another truck is arriving for the dinner, kicking up dust and Omar is wailing for his brother now, as loud as he can, screaming for his attention, but it is too late. The light is gone and each frame of time is too short. The whisper overhead has become the relentless hum of a giant indestructible insect.

Karimullah has stopped. He hears the sound, too, and he's looking into the sky. He raises his gun instinctively, but it is useless and he begins to run. The gates of the compound burst open and the members of his family try to dash away, tumbling in their robes, calling on God. They're helpless. They cannot see what is overhead, but they sense it from the sound and they experience the degradation of fear. Their bowels give way and they stumble and fall. The little ones put their hands over their ears as if that will stop what is coming.

Haji Mohammad does not run. He's a man. He walks slowly and deliberately from the compound, holding the hand of one of his guests. Omar is on the ground now and he sees the sudden shadow of a metal arrow darken the orchards. The fire dragon is descending, but he cannot hear its roar. It is moving faster than its sound, it is so quick. This last moment, no more than the blink of an eye and it is too late. The trees bend and the grass goes flat and the animals bellow for help and the people of Omar's world are stopped in time.

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Stop *these* wars?

Anti-War re-activism or Peace pro-activism—machine or system?

We cannot have peace if we are only concerned with peace. War is not an accident. It is the logical outcome of a certain way of life. If we want to attack war, we have to attack that way of life.

—A.J. Muste

by Kim Carlyle

Suppose in response to a great mass of activists in the Capital, the Chief Executive withdrew all troops from all countries where we are fighting? Would we have peace?

No. All we'd have is a cease fire until the next hostilities broke out. The military-industrial-congressional-media complex would remain intact—and poised for the next opportunity to promote and exercise America's favorite foreign policy tools: threat of military force, quickly followed by use of military force.

Simply ending the current wars would be like relieving a headache with a pain-reliever. The headache is but a symptom; until the underlying causes—stress, poor body mechanics, overindulgence, hunger, allergies, and so on—are addressed, we can expect headaches to return.

Typically, our efforts to relieve the headache of war ignore its many causes. We concentrate our attention on the “decision-makers”: the President and members of Congress. In “Slowing the Wheel of War: A Spiritual Struggle” (*War Crimes Times*, Fall 2010), Chuck Fager tells us that the “fixation on individuals...is a great obstacle to adequate understanding and planning for peace work” and he provides a diagram that shows some of the forces that turn the

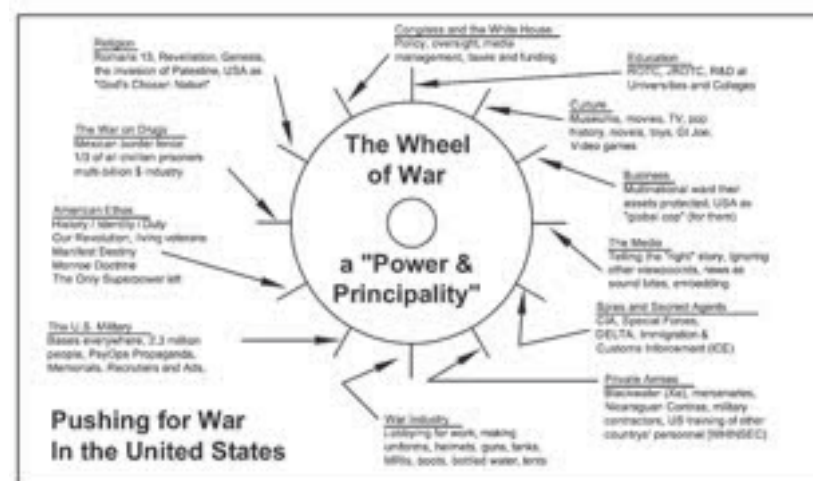
wheel of our war culture. Fager says individual leaders can come and go without a change because “the whole U.S. militarist enterprise has developed an overarching ‘spirit,’ with its own dynamic and momentum. It has become an autonomous ‘power.’” Therefore, to be an effective counterforce, we must direct our attention to the other forces that enable and feed the war machine.

But “wheel” and “machine” suggest a mechanism that might be disabled with a well-placed monkey wrench. Instead, what we are up against (and participants in) is a dynamic, organic, complex system of systems with multiple causes and effects and feedback loops. To end all wars (and achieve peace) requires a careful analysis of the system followed by campaigns that disempower the subsystems that support war, replacing them as needed with benign alternatives.

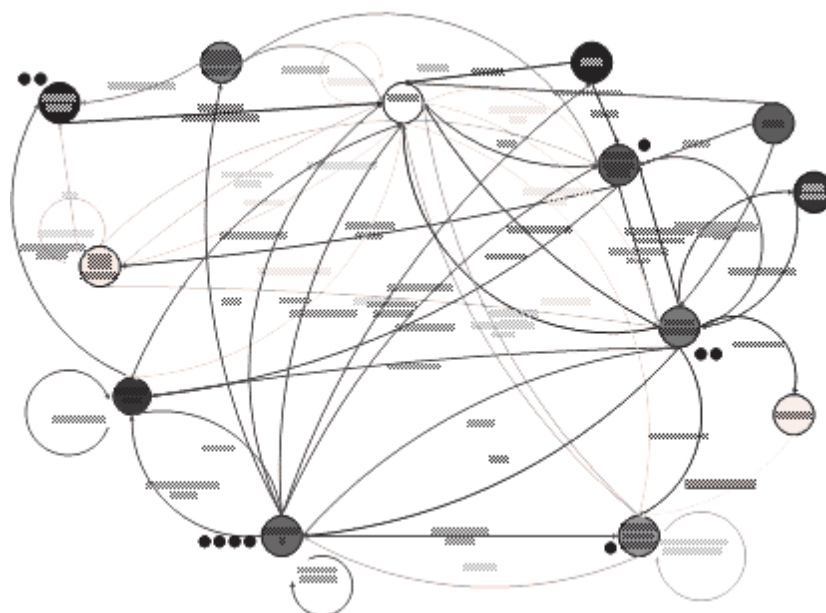
For openers, we must recognize our personal involvement. Brian Willson in “Breaking Our Addiction to War” (*WCT*, Winter 2010), wrote: “Habits of obedience to our system have historically been reinforced by our personal addiction to consumer goods, fed by the myth that our material well-being derives from our ‘exceptionalism’ as U.S. Americans. Our allegiance to this myth and our addiction to its benefits are what enable those dreadful wars—these are nothing more than imperial projects to assure, at gunpoint, continuation of our American Way Of Life, not to mention endless profits for the ‘emperor’ and his entourage.”

When I drive my personal vehicle to an antiwar demonstration where I wave a sign whose cardboard came from an endangered forest and wear a protest t-shirt made in a Central American sweatshop, which message—“No war for oil!” or “Keep the cheap goods coming!”—is louder?

Few would deny that our wars are largely related to our energy “needs.” What if decades ago we had heeded President Jimmy Carter’s call for transition to sensible use of energy? We’d be taking public transportation; we’d have solar-powered homes; and we’d likely not be “bringing democracy” to the Middle East. In fact, George W. Bush and his cabal of oil industry cronies would probably not even have come to power—after all, it was the energy industry that bankrolled “the Decider’s” run for office and it was a nation of SUV drivers that gave him almost half of the popular votes. Imagine for a moment, to use Grover Norquist’s



The Wheel of War (from Chuck Fager/quakerhouse.org)
Below: Diagram of dynamic, complex systems



imagery, if we had shrunk the oil industry to the size where we could drown it in a bathtub!

“Don’t waste time mourning, organize!”—Joe Hill

Such a campaign—and campaigns are what we need, not just one-time actions—would bring together diverse groups in a strategy of lawful (imagine that!) civil resistance based on economic action. (In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Gene Sharp offers “198 Methods of Nonviolent Action” and 49 of them involve economic noncooperation.) Our personal spending decisions give us the power, if we choose to exercise it, over the corporations that control the government.

That’s but one method; Sharp also describes many forms of social and political noncooperation and various types of interventions.

To end not just *these* wars, but *all* future wars, we must think systemically, organize, and design and execute creative campaigns that will radically alter the entire structure—a comprehensive approach that is proactive against the whole system of war, not just reactive to the latest war. (It’s a false argument that most people were against the war in Iraq before Bush invaded in 2003; the war had been going on since 1991!)

Such nonviolent activism would be working toward peace in the sense of “shalom”—wholeness, health, and harmony—and analogous to a holistic medical approach to the problem of a headache.

The articles by Chuck Fager and Brian Willson are posted at WarCrimesTimes.org. See Gene Sharp’s methods at the Albert Einstein Institution: aeinstein.org

SINCE 1955 when he registered as a conscientious objector, Karl Meyer has been an activist for peace, advocating nonviolence, organizing demonstrations, and refusing to pay taxes to finance war. Over the years, he has come to realize that an essential piece of peace activism has been missing. Recently he wrote:

The avaricious momentum of our culture drives us inexorably into repeated outbreaks of hot war. We cannot reverse our own participation in this process of culture simply by holding more demonstrations and events for peace. We must think about where we are going and understand how our own economic and social patterns of life contribute to the overall momentum of violence.

Our lifestyles not only contribute to the occasion of war, they also contribute to our ecological crisis. Meyer also asserts that, in addition to the hot wars that erupt all too frequently, since the middle 20th century we have lived with an ongoing subtext of two quiet wars:

One is the low intensity war of Western culture against the biological viability of our mother Earth. The other is the imperial war of U.S. culture against weaker countries for control and exploitation of the limited material resources of our planet.

These quiet wars—one of exploitation, the other of ecological destruction—are inextricably linked.

The experience of my whole life tells me that we, in America, must learn to live in a radically different way. We must consume less, destroy less, and share the wealth of Earth with all that is alive around us, or we cannot have lasting peace with all who need to survive and thrive with us on the same planet.

Why I am sailing on *The Audacity of Hope* to Gaza

by Kenneth Mayers

Between 1942 and 1945, 21 members of my mother's extended family are known to have died in German concentration camps: seven in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia; seven in Riga, Latvia; four in Auschwitz, Poland; two elsewhere in Poland; and one in Sachsenhausen, Germany. Undoubtedly there were others whose place and dates of death are still unknown. Others managed to escape to Israel, where I still have family.

So why am I sailing on *The Audacity of Hope* this June in an attempt to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza?

The first reason is tied to my ethnic heritage and family history. At a universal and abstract level, I am following this course of action because I believe the blockade is illegal under international law that prohibits the collective punishment of a population. But at a more specific personal level, it is because I believe Israel's leaders have drawn too narrow an understand-

ing from the great lesson of the holocaust, a lesson often summarized in the slogan, "Never again!"

The narrow understanding can be stated as "Never again shall Jews be subjected to the persecution that culminated in the holocaust." A broader understanding would be, "Never again should any people be subjected to the persecution that culminated in the holocaust."

It is a tragic irony that after a millennium of confinement to the ghettos of Europe, the Jewish state has created the world's largest ghetto in Gaza by blockading its ports, control-

ling its air space, and with some support from Egypt, imposing tight limits on access and egress by land. But far beyond tragic was the turning of the ghetto into a killing field with Operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009. According to a B'Tselem

human rights report, "1,389 Palestinians were killed, 759 of whom did not take part in the hostilities. Of these, 318 were minors under age 18." It was not a holocaust, but it was—and remains—dreadful persecution of a destitute, refugee population.

Since Cast Lead, the blockade has continued to devastate the people and economy of Gaza.

Although Egypt on Saturday [May 28] finally reopened its crossing with Gaza, it is still abiding by old agreements constraining the entry of desperately needed construction materials. As the weapons and armaments used in the attack in large part either came from the United States or were enabled by the \$3 billion annual aid given to Israel by our government, the act of attempting to break the blockade is an act of atonement.

The second reason I am sailing to Gaza is tied to my service as a Marine Corps officer from 1958 to 1966 at which point I gave up that career in dismay with American foreign policy.

I took an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." My oath had no expiration date. I still feel bound by it and I strongly believe that our policy makers are violating the Constitution in the carte blanche support, financial and military, that they provide to the Israeli government. That support was made abundantly clear when Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to Congress was loudly applauded even as he backed Israeli colonization of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and misrepresented the fact that Israel has openly discriminatory laws against Palestinians in both Israel and the occupied territories.

It has been almost exactly one year since the Israeli Defense Force attacked the ships of the first International Flotilla on May 31 en route to Gaza, killing nine passengers on the Turkish ship, *Mavi Marmara*. We must not let the Israeli government or the American government think that stopping one flotilla will deter our determination to aid the people of Gaza in their pursuit of freedom from Israeli domination.



"WE ARE UNARMED AND WE ARE SAILING"

Organizers of the U.S. Boat to Gaza expect some fifty people will be aboard *The Audacity of Hope* when it joins the second "freedom flotilla" in late June to break the siege of Gaza. Coordinator Leslie Cagan said, "We are sailing—despite threats by the Israeli armed forces to use attack dogs and snipers against us and despite frantic diplomatic pressure by the Israeli government to prevent other countries from allowing the flotilla to sail." *Learn more and donate at usatogaza.org.*

Letters

Happy Hawker

This is probably not earth shaking material for a letter to the editor, but as a member of Tom Paine Chapter 152 (Lehigh Valley, PA) VFP, the Generale of the chapter has purchased stacks of the Winter and Spring issues, and I, a lowly subcommandante, have really enjoyed hawking them. What has surprised me is how fast they go. I feel that when a window of a car comes down, and an arm reaches out, at least they are going to peruse the paper. And *WCT* is a really good newspaper. I tell them to read what the *Morning Call* and *Express-Times* (local mainstream papers) won't print. These two papers vie with each other to see who can propagandize our constitutional-law-scholar President's bullshit the most.

Barack Osama has shown us that all the trappings of law (judges, juries, lawyers, evidence, verdicts) are all unnecessary wasteful expense. Just shoot the suspects and our people will "rejoice" at "justice being served."

Semper Fidel,

Bernard J. Berg
Easton, PA

Unhappy Unknown

War Crimes Times: You are delusional and absolutely the filthiest scum our great country has to offer. You are the enemy!

Anonymous
Asheville, NC

March on Washington

While the many demonstrations at our statehouses in protest of the war-mongering, fascist Right taking over the country and depriving the rest of us of our constitutional rights, civil liberties, union bargaining rights, and livelihoods, Professor Noam Chomsky had the best idea of all: a march on Washington. I have suggested to Professor Chomsky that he urge Michael Moore to organize such a march and film it for his next documentary with Professor Chomsky as keynote speaker.

I have a dream: that such a march would be just as great in its own way and would celebrate the historic march on Washington Dr. King organized in 1963, perpetuate his work and dreams for world peace and global social justice, and of course his spirit would hover over us and would give us strength and guidance.

Willard B. Shapira
Roseville MN

Lunacy Over Afghanistan

As much as I would like to believe our officials' statements about progress in our 10 year war in Afghanistan, there are three issues I find troubling.

The first has to do with reports that 25% of Afghan soldier and police trainees desert their forces after they have received their enrollment bonus, training, and weapons. According to this desertion rate, we are guaranteed an ever growing number of insurgents against whom our soldiers are deployed.

The second issue is the bribes we pay to the Taliban for safe passage for our supply convoys through territory under Taliban control. These bribes are reported to be the largest source of income to the Taliban, and again, would seem to guarantee continued financial support for our supposed enemies.

Finally, the very idea of the USA transplanting democracy in Afghanistan ignores the obvious fact reported by journalists across the political spectrum that our own democracy is broken. If Washington DC is a mess of corruption unresponsive to the wishes of citizens, how could we possibly achieve effective democracy in Kabul?

It seems to me that ten years of this sort of "progress" is quite enough. Let's bring our soldiers home from Afghanistan. Bring the war dollars home to fund our communities, for real security. It is time to end this lunacy.

John Heuer
Pittsboro, NC

Trigger Topic Suggested

Your latest Spring issue of *WCT* and the previous issue did not mention 9/11. If someone wrote a history of the Vietnam War without mentioning the fraud of the Tonkin Gulf "trigger," so to speak, the author would be laughable.

Do an article on "Operation Gladio" and you'll find out why the CIA is a huge player in all this violent intrigue which has given us the 9/11 wars.

Conal Foley
Boston, MA

A Soldier's Life

Tanks clatter and clank
people scream and cry
maim and kill—
that's a soldier's life

one day behind a fast food
counter
the next day behind a gun
aimed at real people—
that's a soldier's life

and then he gets sent home
in one piece if he's lucky

or so it might seem

that one piece is never
what it used to be.

—Charles Rossiter

This is Not Our War, We Are Not Your Soldiers

Everyone in my generation...knows what assault rifles, battle rifles, sniper rifles, etc. look like and what they can do now because of video games... this is an industry bent on planting a positive image of warfare in the minds of kids who don't even know what critical thinking means yet.

by Lauren Martino

"We Are Not Your Soldiers!" a project of World Can't Wait, is educating youth about military recruitment through bringing Iraq war veterans to speak in high schools about the reality of going to war for this country.



After the World Can't Wait presentation, it was apparent that my students were affected. The next day one student showed me a poem he wrote about a young boy from the ghetto enlisting in the military and dying, another asked for a World Can't Wait T-shirt, and yet another, who had wanted to join the military, handed me a recommendation form for a vocational school. Others are still lost forever to the military but the "We Are Not Your Soldiers" tour offered the education American youth really need and that more teachers need to be more conscious of.

—Teacher from
Paul Robeson High School

I am an 18-year-old intern at World Can't Wait. I feel this cause is very current, very serious, and in dire need of support. Not only is the organization trying to save the lives of my peers, but it is trying to open our eyes, light the fire of rebellion in our young spirits and get us to act on changing this world we are about to inherit. The organization tries to reach students by visiting classrooms around the country and explaining the true nature of war through the example of personal experience—for instance, an Iraq war veteran named Ethan McCord who spoke at my school.

"Collateral Murder" video leaked to Wikileaks allegedly by Bradley Manning, an intelligence analyst in Iraq. Once the video had been shown to the students, McCord entered the room (he can't bear witness to the gruesome events again so he doesn't join viewings

Website: www.wearenotyoursoldiers.org
Facebook: [We Are Not Your Soldiers!](http://www.facebook.com/wearenotyoursoldiers)
347-709-2697 or 866-973-4463
wearenotyoursoldiers@worldcantwait.org

of the footage) and explained what had taken place. This is not a video of justified combat; this is a video of reporters and other civilians being massacred from an Apache helicopter without hesitation because the pilots claimed they had mistaken the reporters' cameras for weapons. Then in the grainy military archive footage you see a van pulling up to the wounded and a man jumps out. The man is an innocent civilian trying to rescue the wounded and drive them to a hospital. The helicopter shoots again. Ethan ran up to the totaled van to find two severely injured young children; he tried to help them and his superiors acted as though his heroism was wasting time. Then it was explained how this video—the reality—is denied to the people, the taxpayers funding this war. The man who is accused of sharing this shameful truth with the world, Bradley Manning, is now being held in solitary confinement as a criminal in a maximum security prison in Virginia [Manning was moved to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, in April.—Ed.]. This is the war our country is fighting.

My generation has grown up thinking that because our parents, grandparents, older family members and teachers were the heroic, anti-war hippies who saved us from the draft, that we are free from the military. But what the military is doing now is almost more scary. True, the army can't technically just pluck us up and ship us out to front lines of war anymore, but they've concocted new and manipulative tools of recruitment. Instead of putting unwilling kids into war, now they've decided to seduce unaware kids into their "game." And ingrained in the minds of many kids today, war is a game.

The military has poured millions of dollars into the research and development of computerized training programs. Sounds like an honest enough cause until you find out that the same technology is being marketed as video games for kids as young as 13. The Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Air Force, and the Navy have all met with computer industry executives and computer researchers from companies like Pixar, Disney, Paramount, and George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic. In the past ten years,

the military has spent more than \$33 million to design, launch, and advertise an online military game called "America's Army" that anyone 13 and older can play for free. In some instances, you even have to contact the local military recruitment office to play. In a survey taken by the game's creators, it was found that 60% of new recruits played this game a minimum of five times a week.

Sure, at 13 years old we know video games aren't real. What we don't realize though is that video games are addictive—addictive means repetition, and repeating the role of a soldier as a form of entertainment (a positive experience) on a regular basis leaves a mark in your mind you may not even realize is there. In a sense, these games are like "how-to-be-a-soldier" class, just like going to an art class and enjoying it over and over makes me want to be an artist, or playing soccer over and over and enjoying it may make you want to be a professional soccer player. The more you know about something and enjoy it, the more you may think about pursuing it as a career.

Everyone in my generation with a game console—brother, boyfriend, or any kind of adolescent "masculine" influence in their life—knows what assault rifles, battle rifles, sniper rifles, etc. look like and what they can do now because of video games like Halo and Call of Duty which feature specific realistic war technology. Ask your mom how to hold a rocket launcher and I bet she wouldn't have the faintest idea, but ask someone of our age and they'll more likely than not give you the correct answer. This is not just a break out of cool new



special effects, this is an industry bent on planting an oxymoronically positive image of warfare in the minds of kids who don't even know what critical thinking means yet.

The military has caught onto the swaying powers of the mass media. Back in the '60's the huge anti-war movement didn't just appear from nowhere, hundreds of musicians and artists made it a cool thing to be involved with. It was a cultural phenomenon, and now the military has learned this technique and how to utilize it in reverse. And sadly, my generation—youthfully arrogant—is falling into this trap, only seeing the social implications of their opinions and not the moral ones.

It's not only in our video games, but even in our educational systems. The No Child Left Behind Act, courtesy of the Bush administration, states that all secondary schools receiving federal funding are required to provide recruiters with students' names, addresses, and phone numbers. How is this NOT leaving a child behind? We need a country of educated people, not dead ones.

There's no wacko paranoid theory here; by definition, this is brainwashing—Brainwashing: any method of controlled





THE GAME *America's Army*, "the Official U.S. Army Game (AA) provides young Americans with a virtual web-based environment in which they can explore Army career."

systematic indoctrination, especially one based on repetition or confusion. My generation is being brainwashed by repeated attempts to glamorize a soldier's existence, mollify and confuse the reality of killing or being killed, and convince us of the illusion that this war is for the safety of the American people.

I am a born and raised New Yorker. I was 8 years old when I saw the first plane hit the World Trade Center. I care about the lives of everyone lost and everyone affected and I supported justice, we all did. But this war is not justice. We didn't even need to have a war—an illegal one for that matter. We could have turned to the international criminal courts. But justice for the victims of 9/11

wasn't the priority. The men who flew the planes into the towers were from Saudi Arabia; while the U.S. attacked Afghanistan and Iraq. Don't tell me we had to get Osama Bin Laden; we haven't found him; he could be dead for all we know and his capture is just an excuse. Don't tell me we had to find the weapons of mass destruction either—there are none. So why are we still in the Middle East? There are answers, but you won't find them on FOX news, in the speeches of politicians, or any major news publications. You'll find them in the stories of soldiers and Iraqi citizens, in books, and in blogs. You'll find them when you look up the solid factual history of the Bush family. I'm not going to tell you what I think the

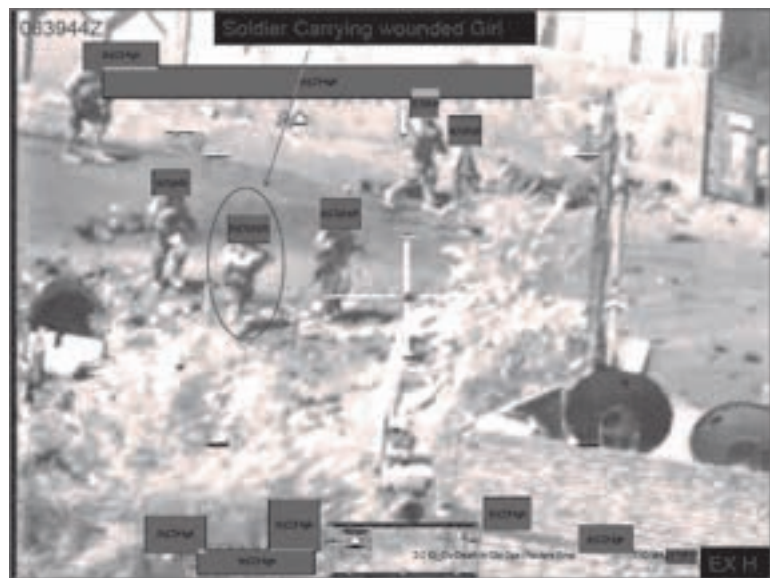
truth is, I'm telling you to figure it out for yourself.

To my generation, this is our country; this is the world we will inherit. We cannot passively live in denial; we have many years ahead of us to live in this decreasingly "free" country and if we do not act now, the consequence will be oppression. And to the generations before us, we need you more than ever. This is no longer a battle against involuntary physical participation in war like the draft. This has become a fight against our own government to keep reality in perspective—a fight to protect our sanity.

This country was built on the idea of democracy, and our government has milked that definition for all it's worth and continues to even as that concept is quickly sinking away from reality to gain our loyalty and

devotion as U.S. citizens. This is not a democracy; this is a representative democracy and our economy is capitalism. Why is this important to know? Because it means the representatives we vote for are obligated not to we the people, but to the capitalist class that keeps our economy afloat. So, when a war is in the making, whose interests do you think our representatives are thinking about? The Capitalist class interests. And when the war begins, whose lives are lost? Ours, the people. This is not our war. We are not your soldiers.

THE REALITY Ethan McCord (circled below) carries a child wounded in the attack captured on video and now known as "Collateral Murder."



Change You Can Believe In

by Elaine Brower

It's been over 10 years since my son, James, joined the U.S. Marine Corps. From birth, it seemed, he wanted to be a Marine. He wore GI Joe underwear, and carried the lunchbox. Every Halloween, he was a soldier or warrior of some sort. It was harrowing for me, an anti-war activist since 1969.

I begged, pleaded, and promised a new car for James not to join when he turned 18. The recruiters showed up the day after James had his high school diploma, and whisked him away to Paris Island. The entire family went to James' graduation to witness this young boy "turn into a man." After the hoopla on Paris Island Field, James didn't hug or kiss me; he was "in uniform" and not allowed to show emotion. He wouldn't even look at me.

From that moment on, life was a nightmare for me and my family. James joined the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit in San Diego, California, the infamous Camp Pendleton. His MOS was 0305, demolitions expert. His specialty was the Javelin, an 80 mm. shoulder-held rocket launcher. My son learned how to kill.

The following week, President Bush announced we were going to catch bin Laden, "DEAD OR ALIVE!" Off went James to Tora Bora, blowing up caves, trying to obtain the \$25 million reward. James would call at 3 a.m. to explain that they had been sent to capture bin Laden, only to be ordered to "pull back." We were both puzzled. There were no answers. The entire country, if not the world, felt on fire with hatred and revenge.

The Marines turned Kandahar over to the Army in January, 2002. James, although disappointed, remained



sparked by patriotism. I protested the war with my daughter and her college group. She was arrested; I bailed her out. I, like other mothers, feared the horror of a chaplain on my doorstep. When I spoke out as an anti-war military mom, I apologized for James, a trained killer, a part of the war machine.

James completed two tours in Iraq. By 2009, James was hurt, haggard, and had begun to question his mission. James no longer attempted to stop my protests. Asked by his commanding officer, and by the Pentagon on the phone, if he agreed with my anti-war opinions, James replied, "No, Sir," but that I, his mother, was entitled to have an opinion. Despite threats of dishonorable discharge if he failed to convince me, James accepted my refusal to stop protesting. We agreed to love and respect each others' lives and beliefs.

By April, 2010, James had been discharged from the military and had returned home. He lost his job. He suffered nightmares and blackouts. Cloistered and depressed, at 28 James could not maintain a relationship. Daily, I witnessed James' rage and helplessness destroy him physically and emotionally.

I traveled to the VA with James. I called him several times a day begging him to get help before he ended his life. James and I traveled this road together,

often at odds, but always with arms locked against the darkness. Until several weeks ago.

James began to change when he read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. He started to read Wikileaks, and books written by veterans with experiences similar to his. Each day James learned something new about how his government betrays him, his fellow marines, and all the troops. He called me to explain this newly revealed "secret" and appeared amazed all over again.

I kept telling myself that I was dreaming, or, he would re-up or give up. I couldn't bring myself to actually be overjoyed that my son had joined me in my fight against the wars. Until he stood up in front of a group of high school students in New York City where we live and declared "Don't join the military. For me, it was a mistake. I'm 30 years old, go to physical therapy twice a week, can't get out of bed in the morning without pain, and am unemployed. I wouldn't wish that on anyone."

As I watched him speak to this class, the floodgates of my soul opened. Ten long years of struggle. I "won," but at the cost of my emotional health, my relationship with my son, James' and his sister's broken bond ... James' TBI, PTSD, and chest pains from the burn pits in Iraq... I wouldn't wish these on anyone.

It's great to watch James now, listen to him talk about the reality of war, and tell kids to stay away from military recruiters. From a staunch nationalistic patriot to an independent thinker who has become an anti-imperialist, the strength and fervor he brought to his young dreams, he now applies to his daily life.

Elaine Brower serves on the steering committee of The World Can't Wait and is a member of Military Families Speak Out. This article was edited by Mia Austin-Scoggins from a longer version which is posted at WarCrimesTimes.org, where there is a link to a video of James speaking to high school students.



My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside
Let freedom ring!
—Samuel Francis Smith

Our foreign policy,
Global hegemony,
Our flag's unfurled;
Without regard for law,
We give them shock and awe,
We occupy and won't withdraw
We rule the world!
—Mack Reilly



You're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who says it.
—Malcolm X

The time is fast approaching when to call a man a patriot will be the deepest insult you can offer him. Patriotism now means advocating plunder in the interest of the privileged classes of the particular State system into which we have happened to be born.
—Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy

Images: A small American flag stands against the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (by William D. Moss); The Marine Wing Support Squadron 271 (MWSS-271) Combat Engineers set a patriotic tone by aligning sandbags around the bunker in the colors of the American flag in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (by LCpl Richard W. Court, USAF); An honor guard from the 1st Special Forces Group transports the flag-draped coffin the first U.S. soldier killed by hostile fire in Afghanistan (by Joe Barrentine); Washington Monument July 4, 1986 (by SSgt. Lono Kollars).



Patriotism is a kind of religion; it is the egg from which wars are hatched.
—Guy de Maupassant

It is lamentable, that to be a good patriot one must become the enemy of the rest of mankind.
—Voltaire

Patriot: the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about.
—Mark Twain

Patriotism is the willingness to kill and be killed for trivial reasons.
—Bertrand Russell

True patriotism hates injustice in its own land more than anywhere else.
—Clarence Darrow

You'll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race.
—George Bernard Shaw

Our country is not the only thing to which we owe our allegiance. It is also owed to justice and to humanity. Patriotism consists not in waving the flag, but in striving that our country shall be righteous as well as strong.
—James Bryce

Bombs, Guns, Sanctions, and Math

Auschwitz was responsible for killing 1.1 million people.

The United States was responsible for killing over 3 million Vietnamese people.

The United States was responsible for killing nearly 1 million people combined in Laos and Cambodia during the Vietnam War.

The United States was responsible for dropping over 250 million "bomblets" from cluster bombs over Laos and Cambodia.

The United States was responsible for killing 500,000 Iraqi children as a result of U.S.-led economic sanctions against that country in 1991.

Madeline Albright, then secretary of state, stated:

"We think the price is worth it."

There is more to this story involving other countries that America has bombed since the end of World War II.

That tally is around 28 countries.

Auschwitz was responsible for killing 1.1 million people.

When it all comes down to it,

It's all about the math.

—Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic Vietnam 1970-71
March 8, 2011



photo by Mike Hastie